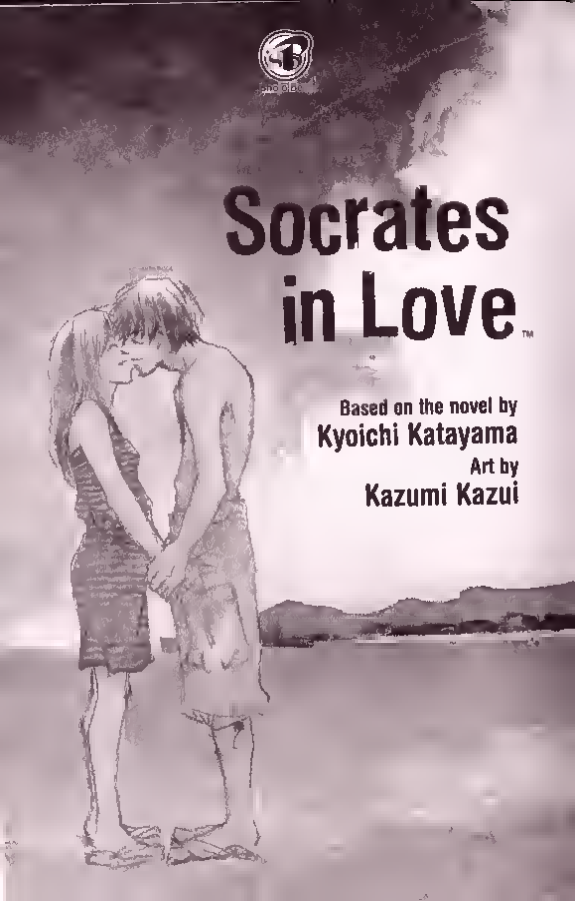
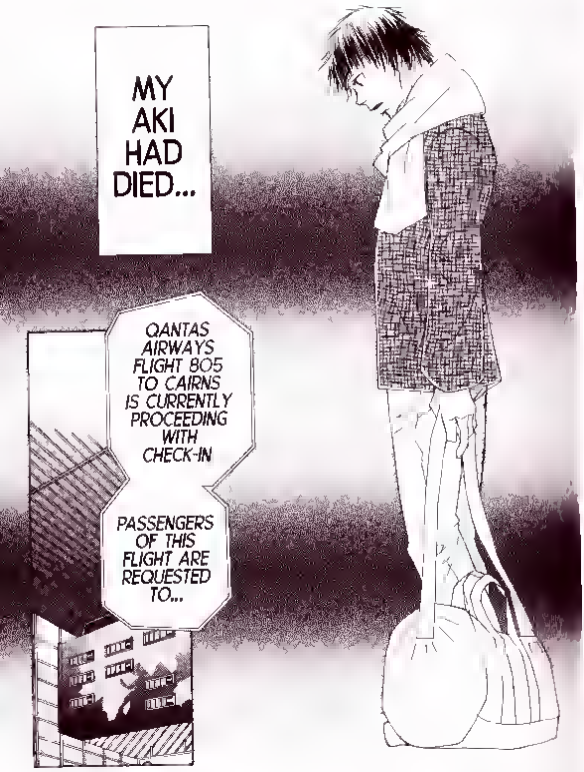
Socrates in Love™

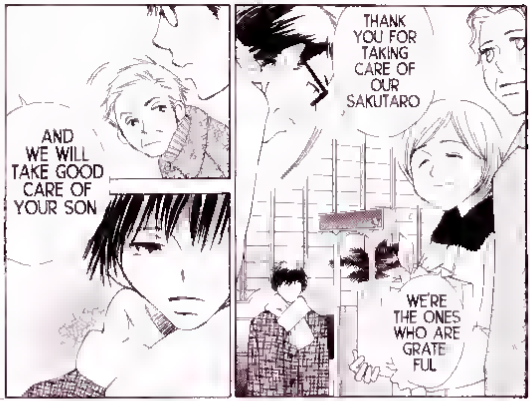
Based on the novel by
Kyoichi Katayama
Art by
Kazumi Kazui




MY AKI HAD DIED...
QANTAS AIRWAYS FLIGHT 805 TO CAIRNS IS CURRENTLY PROCEEDING WITH CHECK-IN
PASSENGERS OF THIS FLIGHT ARE REQUESTED TO...

I MET AKI...
I LOST SIGHT OF HER MANY TIMES FOR VARIOUS REASONS.
BUT AKI WAS ALWAYS BY MY SIDE, CALLING OUT TO ME. IT TOOK ME A WHILE TO REALIZE THAT...

AKI AND I WERE IN THE SAME CLASS FOR THE FIRST TIME DURING OUR SECOND YEAR OF MIDDLE SCHOOL.
SAKU-CHAN...
MY HEART WOULD PROBABLY REMAIN UNSETTLED LIKE THIS...
FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...


AND WE WILL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR SON
THANK YOU FOR TAKING CARE OF OUR SAKUTARO
WE'RE THE ONES WHO ARE GRATE FUL

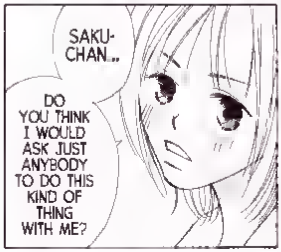
I UNDER-STOOD THAT AKI WAS IN THAT BOX...
BUT I COULDN'T ACCEPT THAT FACT.
TOWARDS THE END, AKI WANTED SO MUCH TO GO TO AUSTRALIA.
I'M SURE SHE IS OVERJOYED THAT SAKUTARO IS COMING ALONG WITH US.
RIGHT ?

UH, EXCUSE ME.
RIGHT, "AKI HIROSE"?
MY NAME IS "SAKUTARO MATSUMOTO."
"SAKU-TARO" IS TOO LONG.
WHO ARE YOU, MY MOM?
COME ON, IT'S EASIER THIS WAY.
DON'T WE TALK TO EACH OTHER A LOT AS CLASS REPRESEN-TATIVES?
AND I DON'T LIKE CALLING YOU "MATSUMOTO" BECAUSE IT'S TOO FORMAL.

GLEAM♡
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY GLEAM?
HIROSE
WE WERE BASICALLY FORCED TO BECOME CLASS REPRESEN-TATIVES
SO DON'T BE SO
CALL ME "AKI." ♡
SO YOU SHOULD CALL ME...
"AKI." ♡
AND SO...
LOOK! LOOK!
SAKU-CHAN.
JOINT DIARY
Saku-Chan and Aki
LOOK AT THIS!
FWP
FWP

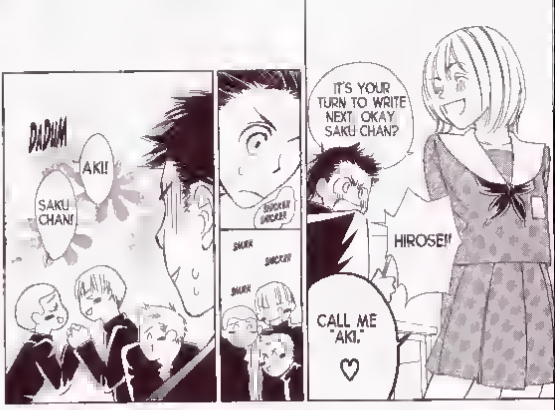
UH
WELL THEN...
DON'T LOOK AT IT NOW!!
FOR NOW...
FWP
WE HAVE TO DISCUSS THE GUIDE FOR THE FIELD TRIP.
LOOK AT IT WHEN YOU GET HOME!
OH, WAIT UP!!
AKI, WE'RE LEAVING.
NO, SAKU-CHAN!
FWP

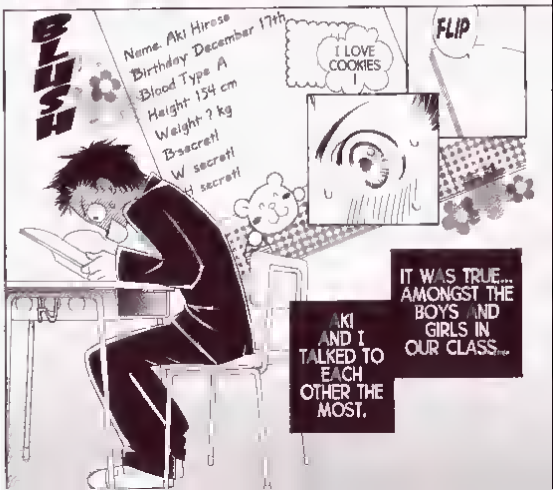
CALL ME "AKI." ♡
LISTEN UP...
WHAT IS THIS? I DON'T WANT TO DO IT!!
ASK SOMEBODY ELSE!

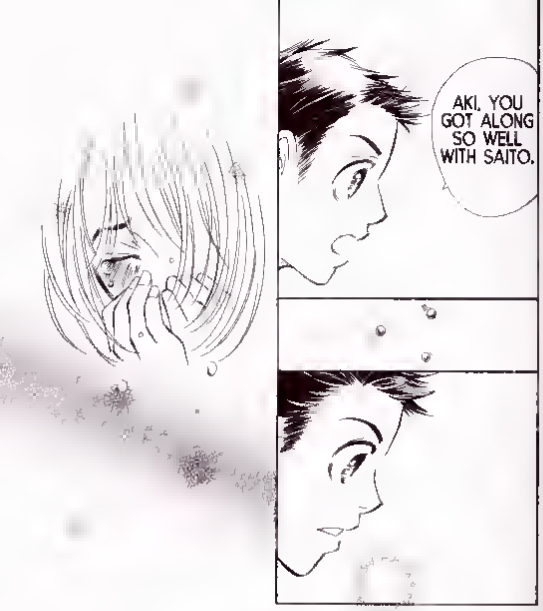

SAKU-CHAN...
DO YOU THINK I WOULD ASK JUST ANYBODY TO DO THIS KIND OF THING WITH ME?

WE'LL START WRITING LOTS OF STUFF IN THERE...
LIKE STUFF ABOUT OUR DUTIES AS REPRESENTATIVES.
HIROSE!

AM I REALLY DOING THIS?
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO WRITE?
BUT TO BE HONEST, I WAS STARTING TO FEEL THE SAME WAY.
THAT'S SO STUPID
HA HA HA
GLANCE
I HAD STARTED TO SENSE...
...THAT AKI WAS BEGINNING TO ENJOY TALKING TO ME AS A MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITE SEX.
OH, AKI I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU!
SAKU-CHAN !!
BUT...
OUR WORLD WAS TOO BUSY.
WHAT CUTE HAND-WRITING
HER PRESENCE WAS MORE HEART-WARMING TO ME THAN ANYONE ELSE'S.
AND AKI WAS ONE OF THOSE MANY THINGS.
NEW CDS
BAD-MOUTHING TEACHERS..
TESTS
SOCCER GAMES

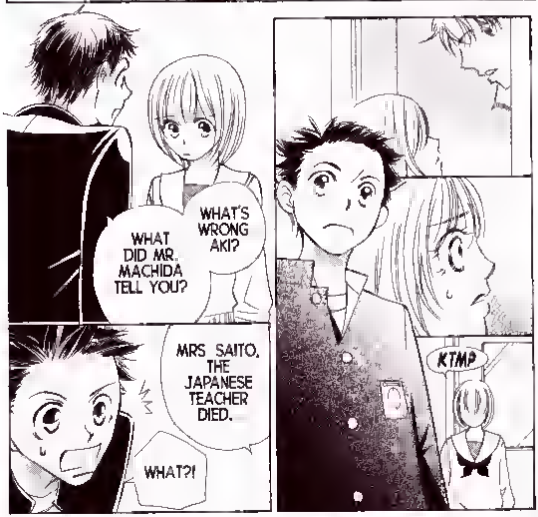

DADUM
AKI!
SAKU-CHAN!
SOCCER SOCCER
SOCCER SOCCER
SOCCER SOCCER
IT'S YOUR TURN TO WRITE NEXT. OKAY SAKU CHAN?
HIROSE!!
CALL ME "AKI." ♡

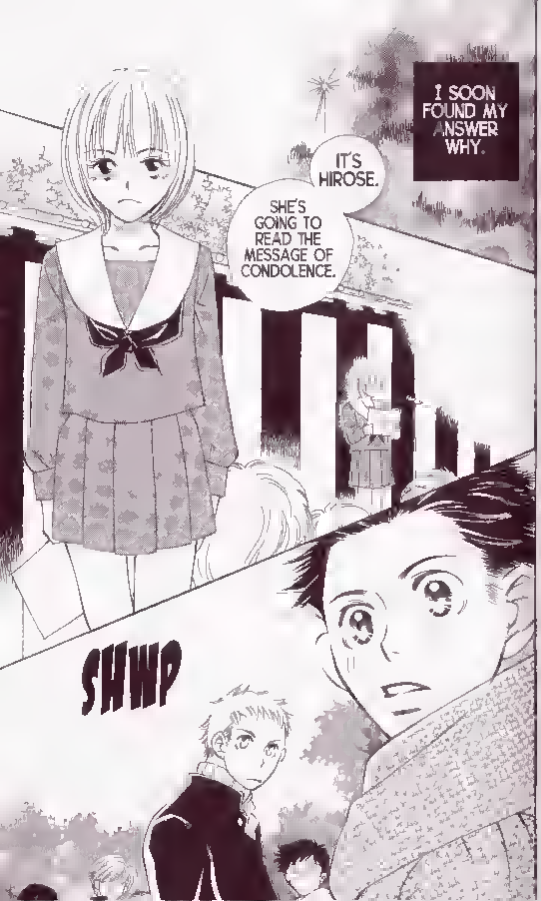

BLUSH
Name. Aki Hirose
Birthday December 17th
Blood Type A
Height 154 cm
Weight ? kg
B-secret!
W secret!
H secret!
I LOVE COOKIES !
FLIP
IT WAS TRUE... AMONGST THE BOYS AND GIRLS IN OUR CLASS...
AKI AND I TALKED TO EACH OTHER THE MOST.


AKI, YOU GOT ALONG SO WELL WITH SAITO.

MANYOHORENGEKYO
IT'S FREEZING WE'RE GONNA END UP DEAD TOO
IF EVERYBODY CAN'T FIT INTO THE BUILDING THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE TOLD THE ENTIRE CLASS TO COME
HOW DID SAITO DIE?

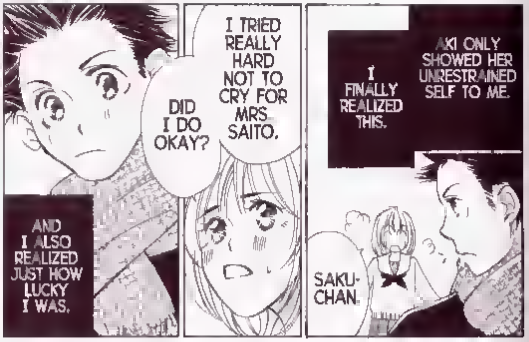
HIROSE!
A MOMENT PLEASE.
OUR DAYS TOGETHER WITHOUT ROMANCE SHONE WITH A HAPHAZARD BRILLIANCE.


WHAT'S WRONG AKI?
WHAT DID MR. MACHIDA TELL YOU?
MRS. SAITO, THE JAPANESE TEACHER DIED.
WHAT?!
KTMP

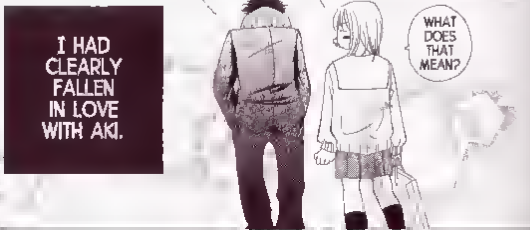

I SOON FOUND MY ANSWER WHY.
IT'S HIROSE.
SHE'S GOING TO READ THE MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE.
SHWP

HA HA HA
MY CURSE MUST HAVE WORKED.
STOP IT, OK!!
SAITO IS REALLY DEAD!!
IT WAS JUST A JOKE.
BUT FOR SOME REASON, I COULDN'T ALLOW IT.

THEY SAY IT WAS CANCER.
CANCER.
DURING THE SCHOOL FIELD TRIP, SHE TOOK AWAY MY HAIR DRYER
YEAH, SHE WATCHED YOU LIKE A HAWK, OK!
SHE WAS LIKE, "JUST A MINUTE THERE, OK!"
CHATTER CHATTER

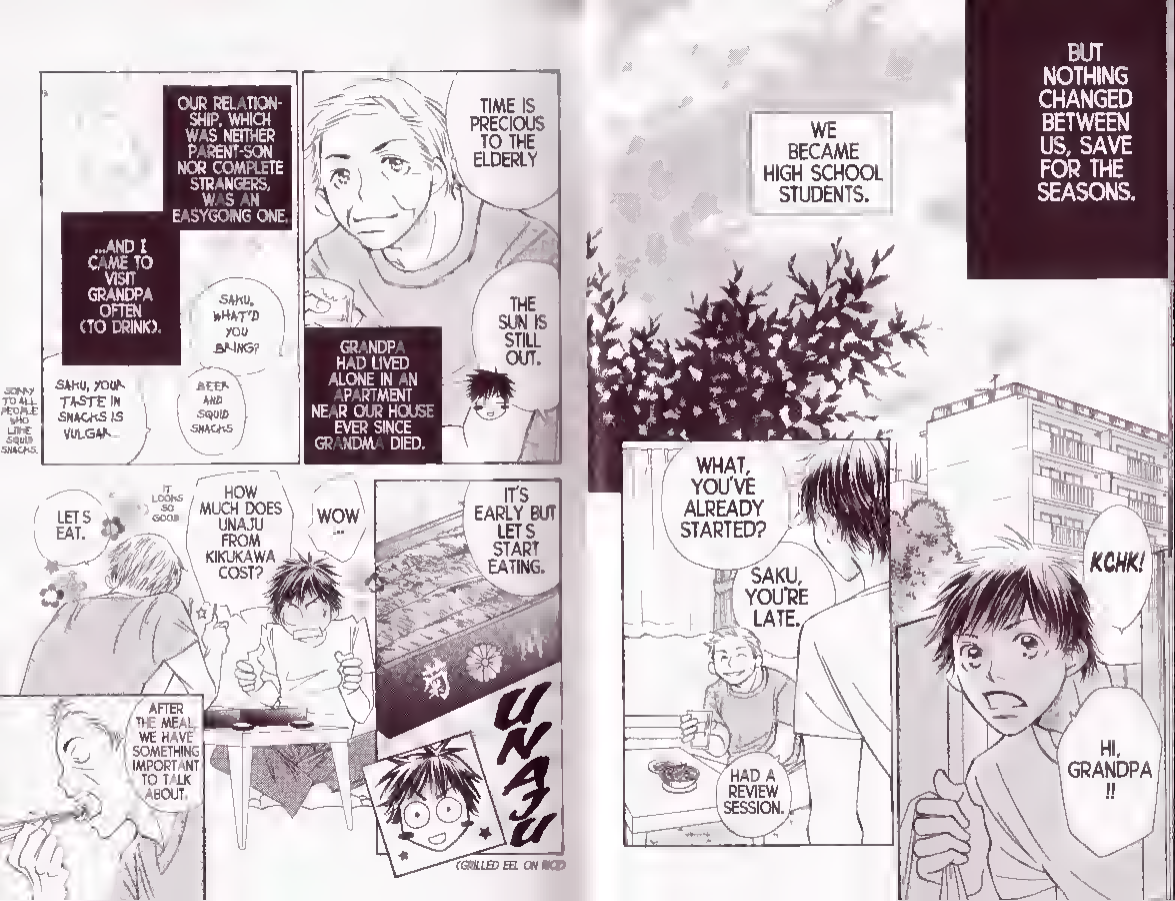

AND I ALSO REALIZED JUST HOW LUCKY I WAS.
DID I DO OKAY?
I TRIED REALLY HARD NOT TO CRY FOR MRS. SAITO.
I FINALLY REALIZED THIS.
AKI ONLY SHOWED HER UNRESTRAINED SELF TO ME.
SAKU-CHAN.

YOU LOOKED COOL.
I HAD...


I HAD CLEARLY FALLEN IN LOVE WITH AKI.
REALLY
PBT
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

DIGNIFIED, SHE STOOD IN THE LIGHT LOOKING BEAUTIFUL.
IT WAS AN AKI I NEVER KNEW BEFORE.

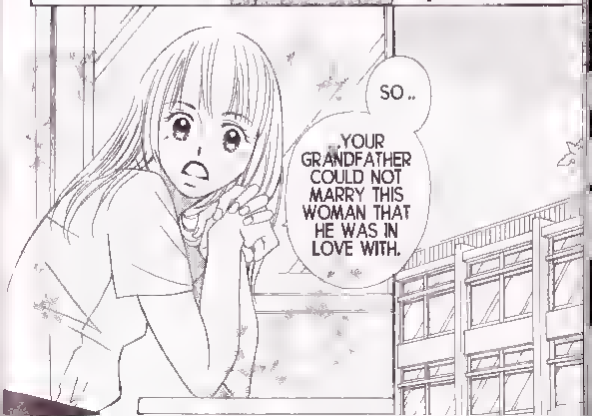
...HAS SAKU-TARO
HIROSE
YOU GOT NO CHANCE.
HEY, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HIROSE?
SHE'S QUIET BUT HAS COURAGE
QUIET?

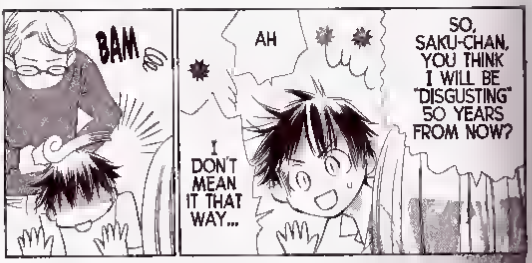

BUT NOTHING CHANGED BETWEEN US, SAVE FOR THE SEASONS.
WE BECAME HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.
KCHK!
HI, GRANDPA !!
WHAT, YOU'VE ALREADY STARTED?
SAKU, YOU'RE LATE.
HAD A REVIEW SESSION.
TIME IS PRECIOUS TO THE ELDERLY
THE SUN IS STILL OUT.
GRANDPA HAD LIVED ALONE IN AN APARTMENT NEAR OUR HOUSE EVER SINCE GRANDMA DIED.
SAKU, WHAT'D YOU BRING?
BEER AND SQUID SNACKS
SAKU, YOUR TASTE IN SNACKS IS VULGAR.
SORRY TO ALL PEOPLE WHO LOVE SQUID SNACKS.
...AND I CAME TO VISIT GRANDPA OFTEN (TO DRINK).
OUR RELATIONSHIP, WHICH WAS NEITHER PARENT-SON NOR COMPLETE STRANGERS, WAS AN EASYGOING ONE.
IT'S EARLY BUT LET'S START EATING.
UNAJU
(GRILLED EEL ON RICE)
WOW...
HOW MUCH DOES UNAJU FROM KIKUKAWA COST?
IT LOOKS SO GOOD
LET'S EAT.
AFTER THE MEAL WE HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TALK ABOUT.

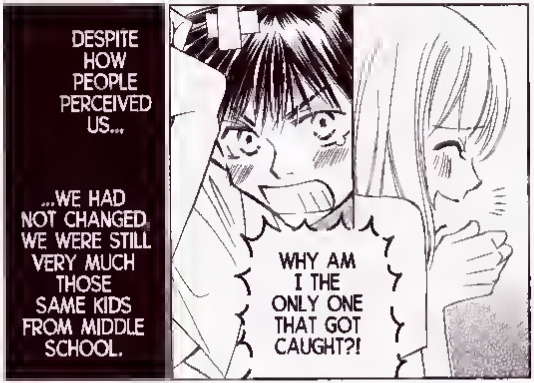
HE WENT AROUND EARNING MONEY RECKLESSLY FOR HER TREATMENT SO THAT HE COULD MARRY HER
BUT SHE RECOVERED..
AND HER PARENTS WOULDN'T ALLOW THEIR DAUGHTER TO MARRY A ROUGH GUY LIKE GRANDPA.
SEEMS THAT WAY.
THIS LADY WAS FROM A WELL-TO-DO FAMILY, BUT SHE HAD TUBERCULOSIS.
AND AT THAT TIME, GRANDPA WAS SUPER POOR
AKI AND T...
SO THIS WOMAN..
SHE MARRIED ANOTHER MAN.
I GUESS BACK IN THOSE DAYS THESE KIND OF...
SHAKI
OUCH!
MATSU MOTO BE QUIET!
SWP
THAT HURTS
WE WERE IN THE SAME CLASS IN THE SAME SCHOOL.
WE WERE ALWAYS TOGETHER.
PEOPLE AROUND US SEEMED TO HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WE HAD.

I CAN'T STEAL THE ASHES FROM SOMEBODY'S GRAVE!!
NO...
FORGET IT!

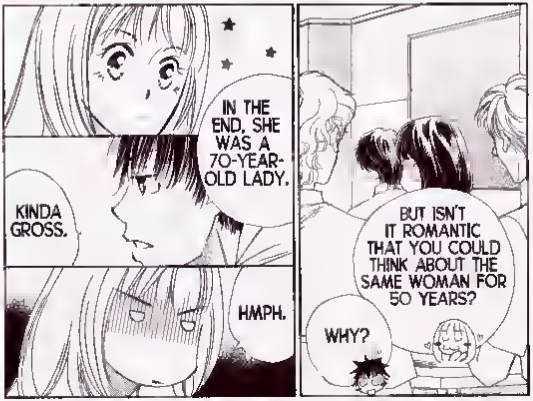
DIDN'T THE UNAJU TASTE GREAT?
SAKU.


SO..
YOUR GRANDFATHER COULD NOT MARRY THIS WOMAN THAT HE WAS IN LOVE WITH.

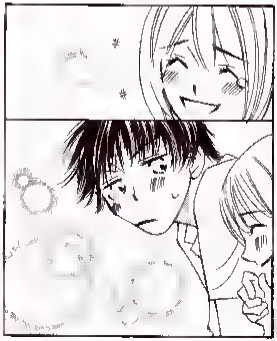

BAM
AH
I DON'T MEAN IT THAT WAY...
SO, SAKU-CHAN, YOU THINK I WILL BE "DISGUSTING" 50 YEARS FROM NOW?

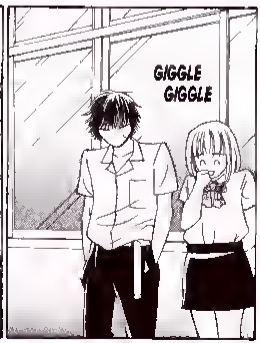

DESPITE HOW PEOPLE PERCEIVED US...
...WE HAD NOT CHANGED. WE WERE STILL VERY MUCH THOSE SAME KIDS FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL.
WHY AM I THE ONLY ONE THAT GOT CAUGHT?!

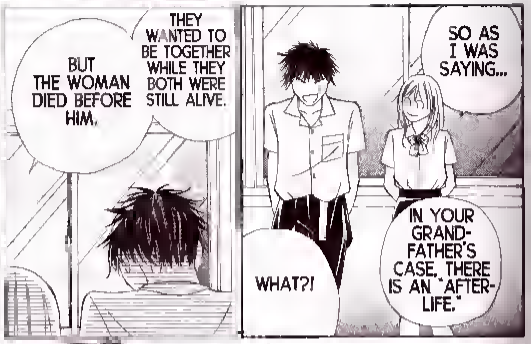
KLK KLK
WHAT DO YOU THINK AKI?
I DON'T BELIEVE IN IT. IT SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING CREATED IN THIS LIFE BY WISHFUL THINKING
FWP
SAKU-CHAN, DO YOU BELIEVE IN AFTERLIFE?


IN THE END, SHE WAS A 70-YEAR-OLD LADY.
KINDA GROSS.
HMPH.
BUT ISN'T IT ROMANTIC THAT YOU COULD THINK ABOUT THE SAME WOMAN FOR 50 YEARS?
WHY?

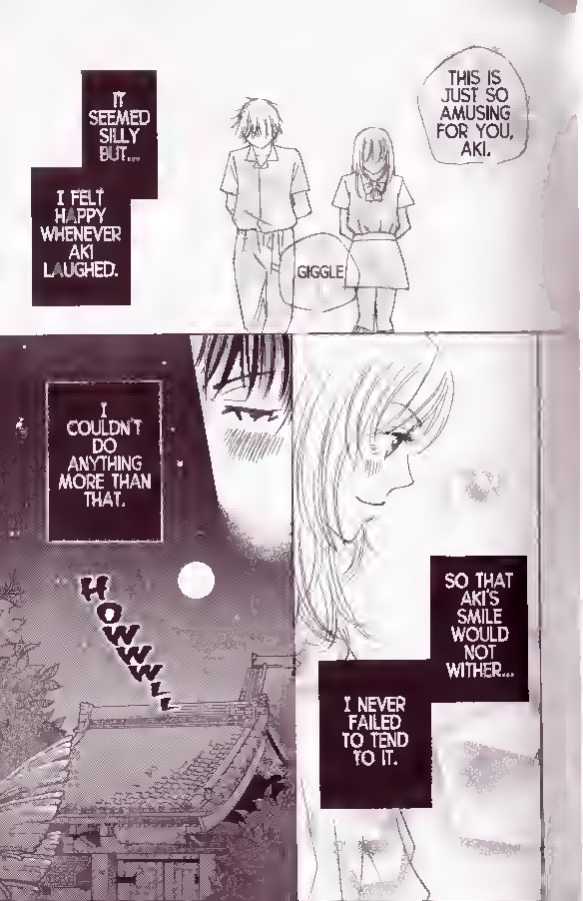
THEN IT'S MEANINGLESS TO DO ANYTHING WITH THAT WOMAN'S ASHES!
OUT IN THE HALL!



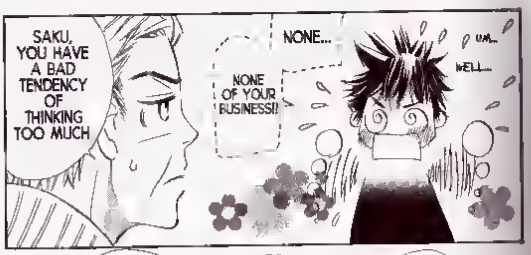

GIGGLE GIGGLE


BUT THE WOMAN DIED BEFORE HIM.
THEY WANTED TO BE TOGETHER WHILE THEY BOTH WERE STILL ALIVE.
WHAT?!
SO AS I WAS SAYING...
IN YOUR GRAND-FATHER'S CASE, THERE IS AN "AFTER-LIFE."

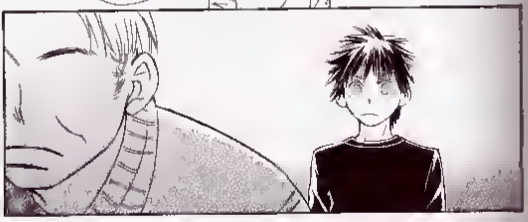
IT'S BEYOND ROMANTIC. IT'S JUST BAD TASTE.
BUT HE WANTS TO DIG UP HER GRAVE.
HE SAYS THAT HE WANTS TO SCATTER HIS OWN ASHES WITH HERS.
MAYBE.
GIGGLE
YOU'RE JUST SCARED?
...IT'S NECESSARY TO LIVE NOW IN THE PRESENT.
EVEN IF THE NOTION OF "AFTER-LIFE" SEEMS VAGUE...

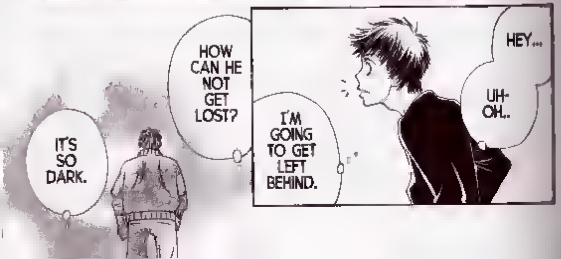

IT SEEMED SILLY BUT...
I FELT HAPPY WHENEVER AKI LAUGHED.
GIGGLE
THIS IS JUST SO AMUSING FOR YOU, AKI.
I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING MORE THAN THAT.
HOWWLL
SO THAT AKI'S SMILE WOULD NOT WITHER...
I NEVER FAILED TO TEND TO IT.

BONK
RATTLE
OUCH!
SAKU-CHAN...
I SIMPLY DON'T WANT TO BECOME A CRIMINAL!!
DUMMY!! THIS IS THEFT!!
A CRIMINAL?
YOU'RE DOING AN HONORABLE VOLUNTEER JOB
YOU WERE THE ONLY PERSON YOUR GRANDFATHER COULD TALK ABOUT THIS WITH.
AND...
EATING WITHOUT PAYING IS A CRIME TOO...

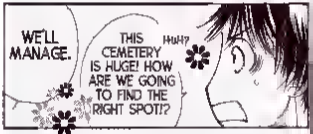

SAKU, YOU HAVE A BAD TENDENCY OF THINKING TOO MUCH
NONE...
NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!!
UM...
WELL...

DON'T END UP LIKE ME. DON'T LOSE YOUR OPPORTUNITY.
IT'S FINE TO BE GENTLE, BUT...




IT'S SO DARK.
HOW CAN HE NOT GET LOST?
I'M GOING TO GET LEFT BEHIND.
HEY...
UH-OH..

YOU AND AKI TAKE THINGS TOO LIGHTLY
C'MON GRANDPA..
WHERE'S THAT FLASHLIGHT?
SAKU.
WE CAN'T TURN ON A LIGHT, THE CARETAKER MIGHT FIND US.

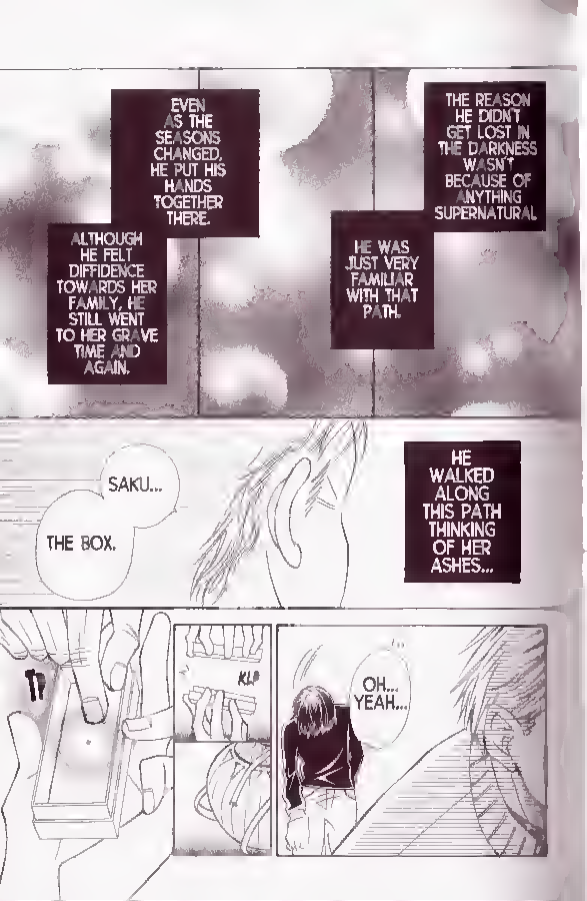

WE'LL MANAGE.
THIS CEMETERY IS HUGE! HOW ARE WE GOING TO FIND THE RIGHT SPOT!?
HUH?

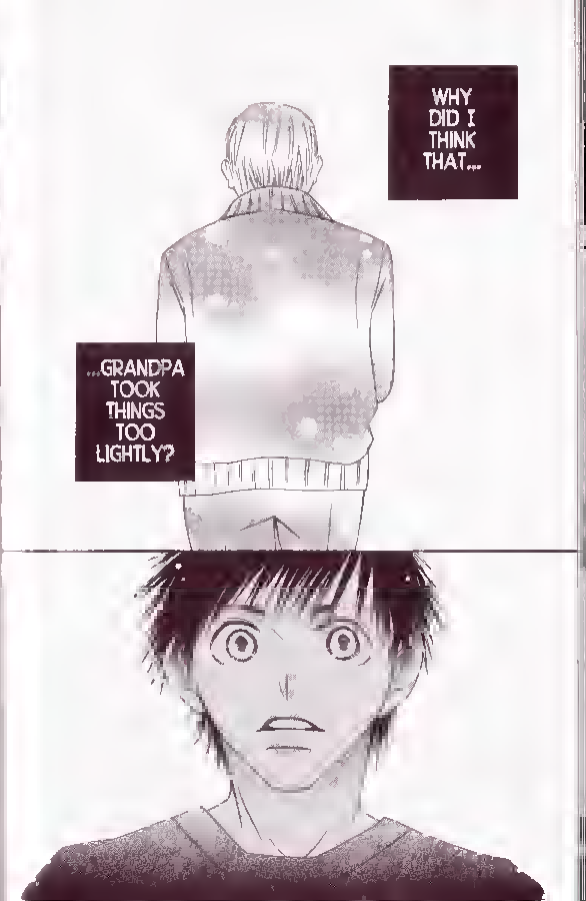
BY THE WAY SAKU, HAVE YOU KISSED AKI YET?
GASP!

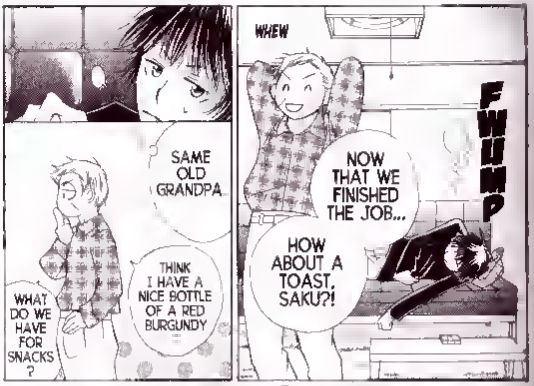
SLUMP
I GUESS WE ARE ACTUALLY GOING TO DO IT.
WASN'T KIKUKAWA'S DELUXE SUSHI COMBO GOOD, SAKU!?
NOW, LET'S DO THIS!!

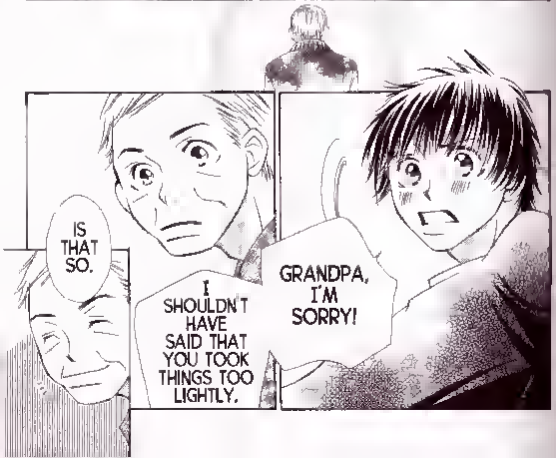
THIS IS IT.
GROGGY
GRAN--
WE DON'T WANT TO GET CAUGHT...
GRANDPA, LET'S HURRY.

NOW THAT'S EERIE.
ARE THEIR SOULS CALLING OUT TO EACH OTHER?
SONNY, WE WILL BE DISTURBING YOU FOR A SHORT WHILE.
FIRST, WE OFFERED INCENSE...
HERE IT IS.
SHIP
CAREFUL, DON'T DROP IT!
AFTER TEN MINUTES OF LABOR...
SHIP
GRANDPA IS YOUR BACK OKAY?

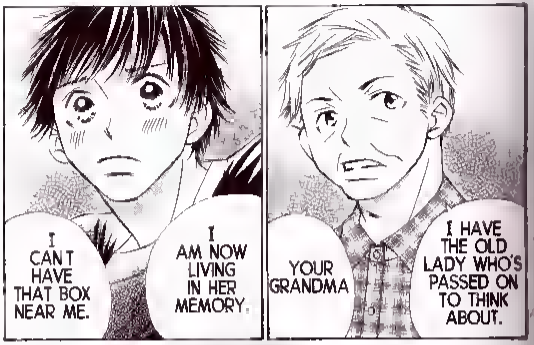

EVEN AS THE SEASONS CHANGED, HE PUT HIS HANDS TOGETHER THERE.
ALTHOUGH HE FELT DIFFIDENCE TOWARDS HER FAMILY, HE STILL WENT TO HER GRAVE TIME AND AGAIN.
THE REASON HE DIDN'T GET LOST IN THE DARKNESS WASN'T BECAUSE OF ANYTHING SUPERNATURAL
HE WAS JUST VERY FAMILIAR WITH THAT PATH.
SAKU...
THE BOX.
HE WALKED ALONG THIS PATH THINKING OF HER ASHES...
KLIP
OH... YEAH...

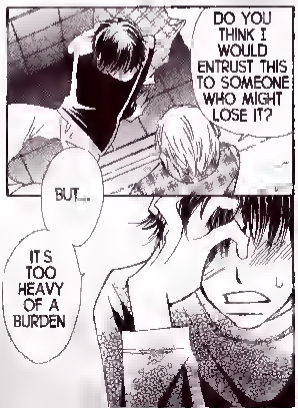

WHY DID I THINK THAT...
...GRANDPA TOOK THINGS TOO LIGHTLY?

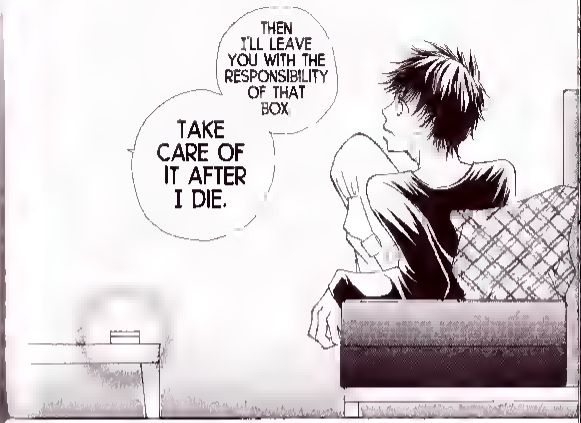

SAME OLD GRANDPA.
WHAT DO WE HAVE FOR SNACKS?
THINK I HAVE A NICE BOTTLE OF A RED BURGUNDY
WHEW
FWUMP
NOW THAT WE FINISHED THE JOB...
HOW ABOUT A TOAST, SAKU?!

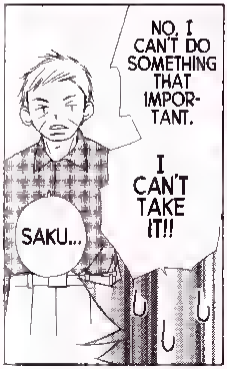

IS THAT SO.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT YOU TOOK THINGS TOO LIGHTLY.
GRANDPA, I'M SORRY!

WHAT A TRAGEDY.
SHE WAS SICK FOR SO LONG, HER BONES ARE BRITTLE.
IT'S BROKEN DOWN SO SMALL.

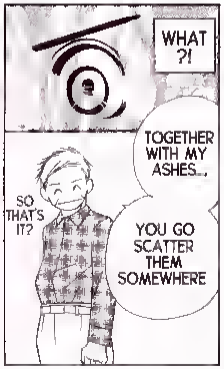


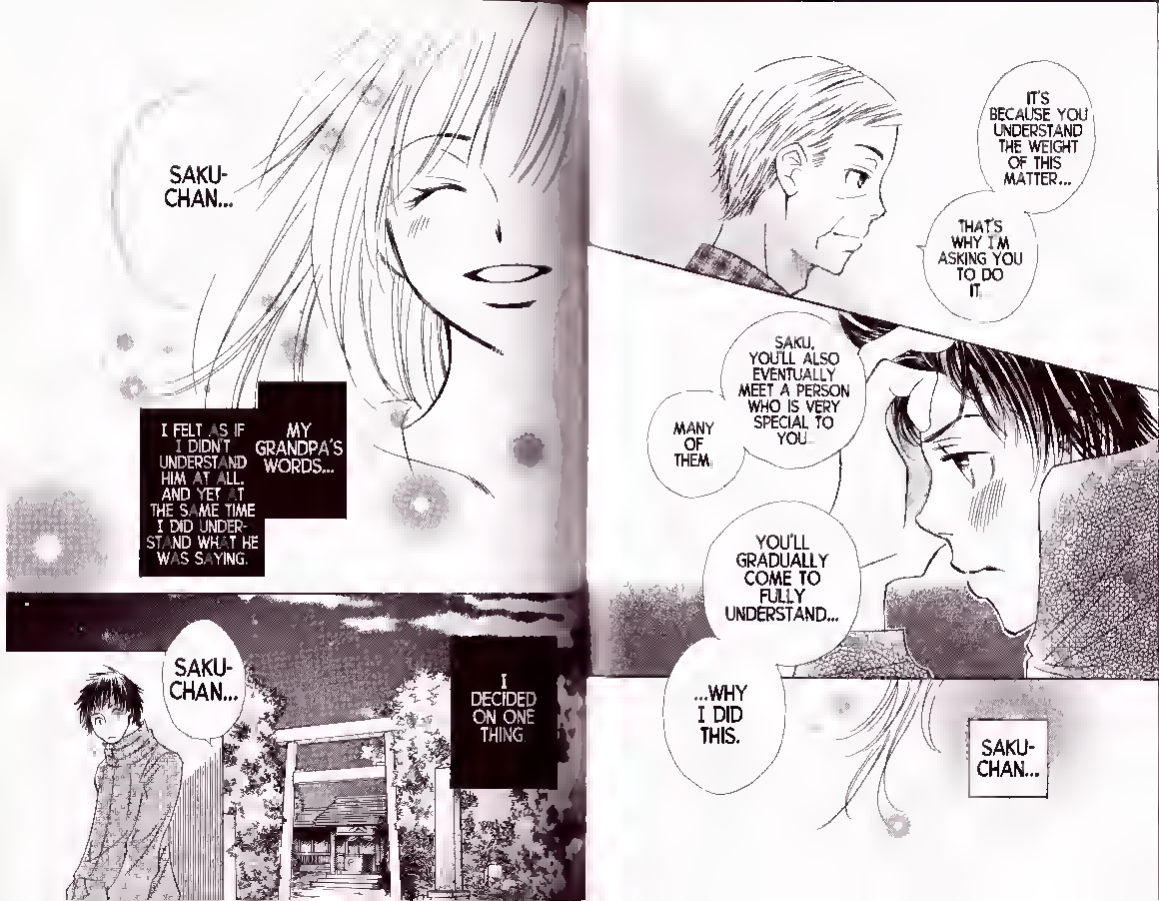


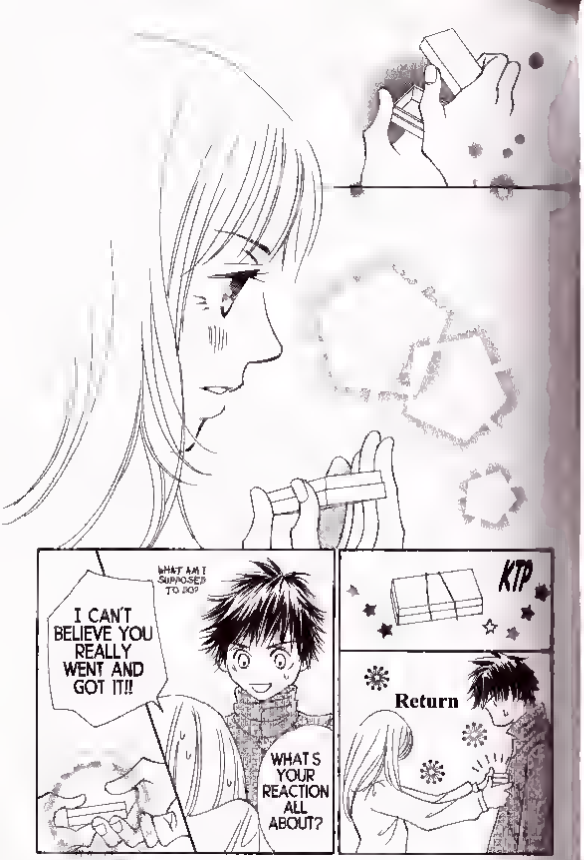


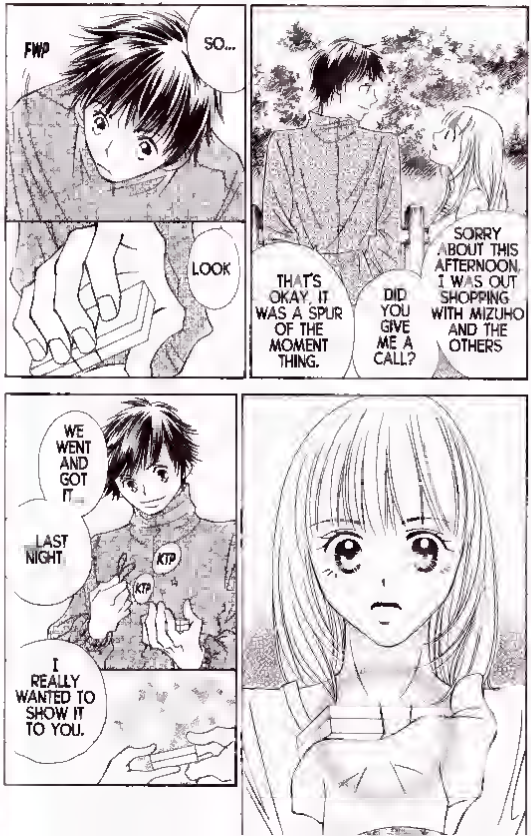


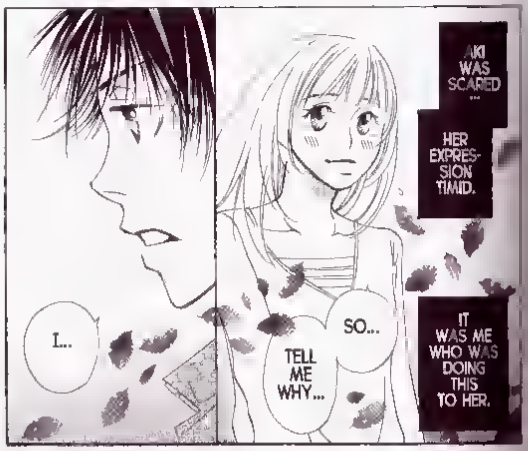
THIS IS WHY HE HAD ME INVOLVED IN THE FIRST PLACE!

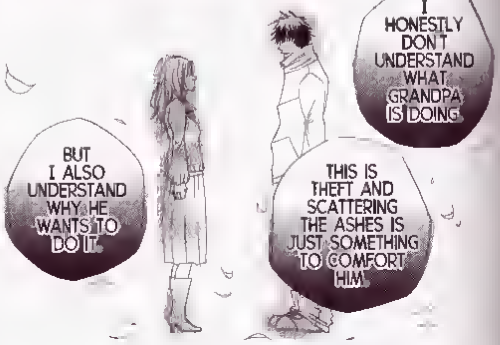



SAKU-CHAN...
I FELT AS IF I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND HIM AT ALL. AND YET AT THE SAME TIME I DID UNDERSTAND WHAT HE WAS SAYING.
MY GRANDPA'S WORDS...
SAKU-CHAN...
I DECIDED ON ONE THING
IT'S BECAUSE YOU UNDERSTAND THE WEIGHT OF THIS MATTER...
THAT'S WHY I'M ASKING YOU TO DO IT.
SAKU, YOU'LL ALSO EVENTUALLY MEET A PERSON WHO IS VERY SPECIAL TO YOU...
MANY OF THEM.
YOU'LL GRADUALLY COME TO FULLY UNDERSTAND...
...WHY I DID THIS.
SAKU-CHAN...

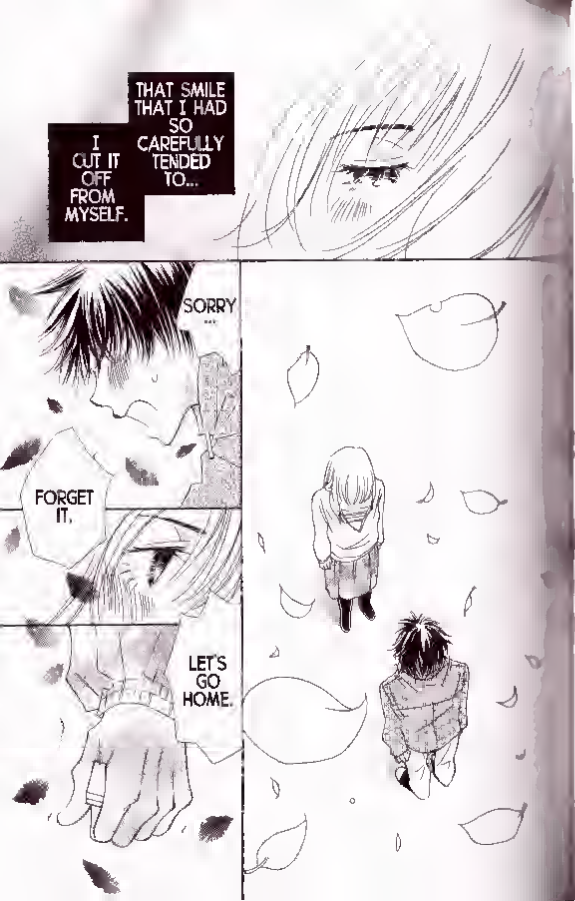

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU REALLY WENT AND GOT IT!!
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?
WHAT'S YOUR REACTION ALL ABOUT?
KTP
Return


FWP
SO...
LOOK
THAT'S OKAY. IT WAS A SPUR OF THE MOMENT THING.
DID YOU GIVE ME A CALL?
SORRY ABOUT THIS AFTERNOON. I WAS OUT SHOPPING WITH MIZUHO AND THE OTHERS
WE WENT AND GOT IT
LAST NIGHT
KTP
KTP
I REALLY WANTED TO SHOW IT TO YOU.


AKI WAS SCARED...
HER EXPRESSION TIMID.
IT WAS ME WHO WAS DOING THIS TO HER.
I...
SO... TELL ME WHY...

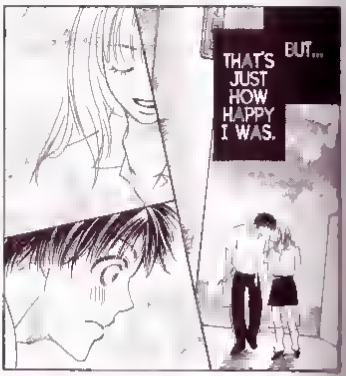

I HONESTLY DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT GRANDPA IS DOING.
BUT I ALSO UNDERSTAND WHY HE WANTS TO DO IT.
THIS IS THEFT AND SCATTERING THE ASHES IS JUST SOMETHING TO COMFORT HIM.

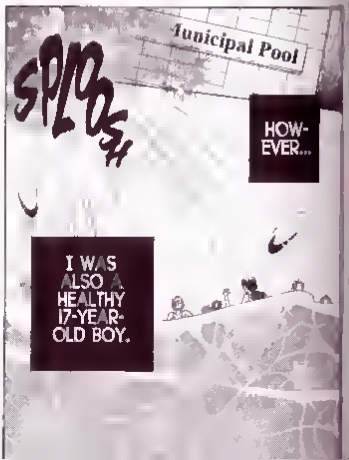
WHY DID YOU DECIDE...
...TO SHOW IT TO ME?
AKI...
DON'T LAUGH...
FLUSH
JUST LISTEN


THAT SMILE THAT I HAD SO CAREFULLY TENDED TO...
I CUT IT OFF FROM MYSELF.
SORRY...
FORGET IT.
LET'S GO HOME.

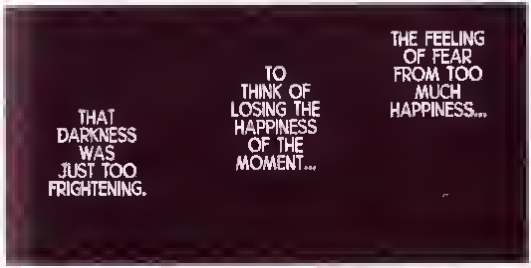
I LOVE YOU, AKI.
EVEN IF YOU DON'T FEEL THAT WAY...
...I DO.

I FELT WERE SIMILAR TO MINE.
UNDER THE FALLING LEAVES...
OUR LIPS CAME TOGETHER ...
TIME AND TIME AGAIN.
GRANDPA HAD GONE DOWN THIS SAME PATH A NUMBER OF TIMES
HIS REASONS ...

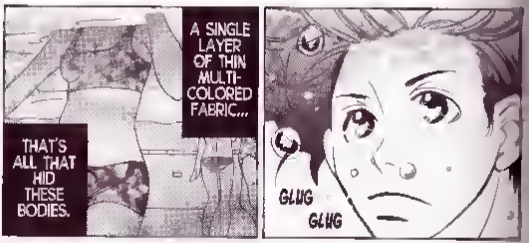

BUT...
THAT'S JUST HOW HAPPY I WAS.


Municipal Pool
SPLOSH
HOW-EVER...
I WAS ALSO A HEALTHY 17-YEAR-OLD BOY.

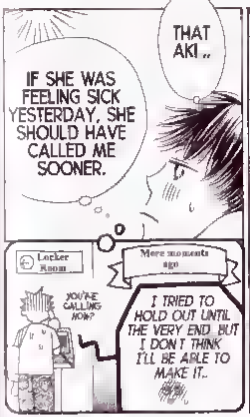
I FELT HAPPY WHEN AKI LAUGHED.
EVEN IF SHE WAS NOT MINE, IT WAS ENOUGH THAT I WAS THERE WITH HER.
BUT AKI DID BECOME MINE.


THE FEELING OF FEAR FROM TOO MUCH HAPPINESS...
TO THINK OF LOSING THE HAPPINESS OF THE MOMENT...
THAT DARKNESS WAS JUST TOO FRIGHTENING.

SHE'D BE MAD.
GLUG
GLUG


A SINGLE LAYER OF THIN MULTI-COLORED FABRIC...
THAT'S ALL THAT HID THESE BODIES.
GLUG
GLUG

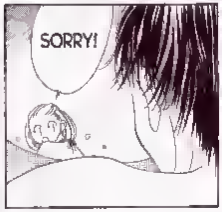
GRAB
CALM DOWN!!
THE GUY DOWN THERE!
OH, NO!!


THAT AKI..
IF SHE WAS FEELING SICK YESTERDAY, SHE SHOULD HAVE CALLED ME SOONER.
Locker Room
More moments ago
YOU'RE CALLING NOW?
I TRIED TO HOLD OUT UNTIL THE VERY END, BUT I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE IT..

WAIT!!
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
GLUB
MOMMY! BALLROOM!
GLUB GLUB GLUB GLUB
GLUB GLUB GLUB GLUB

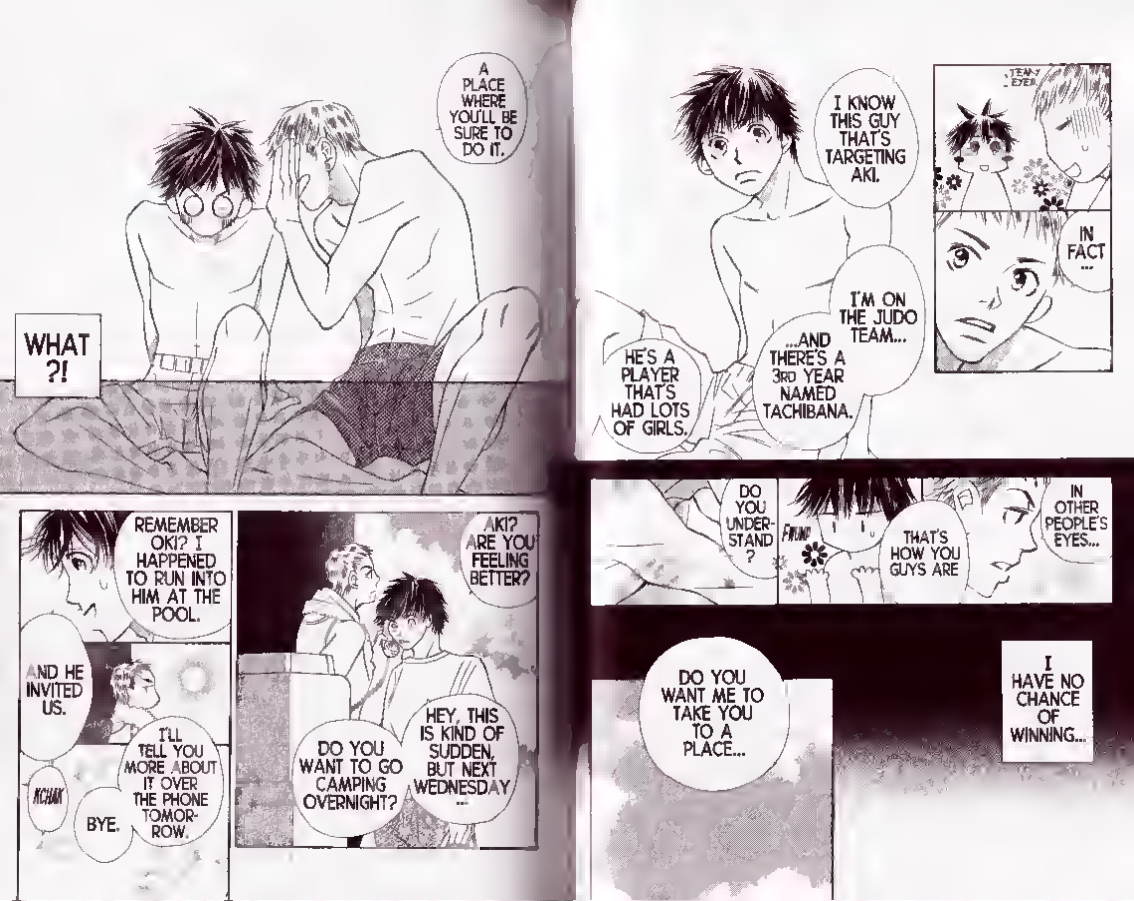
IF AKI FOUND OUT...
KYA HA HA!
AND SO...
IT'S COOL!!
...WHY I WANTED TO COME TO THE POOL SO MUCH...

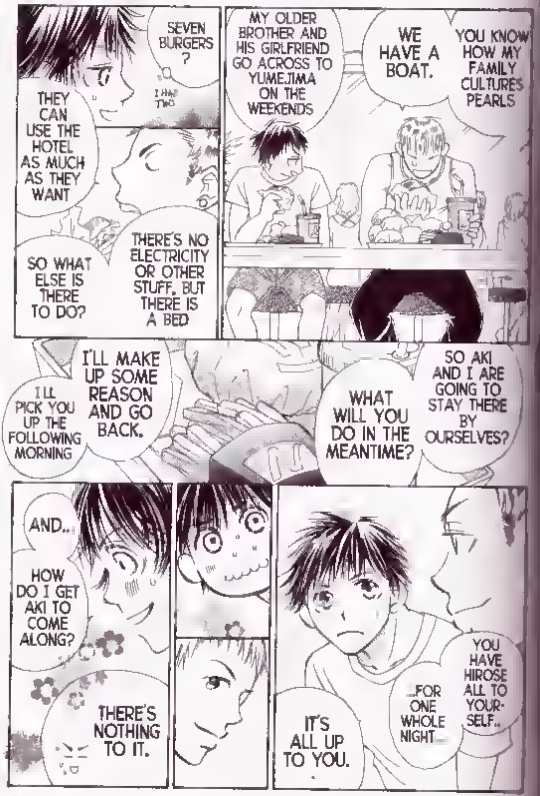
BUMP

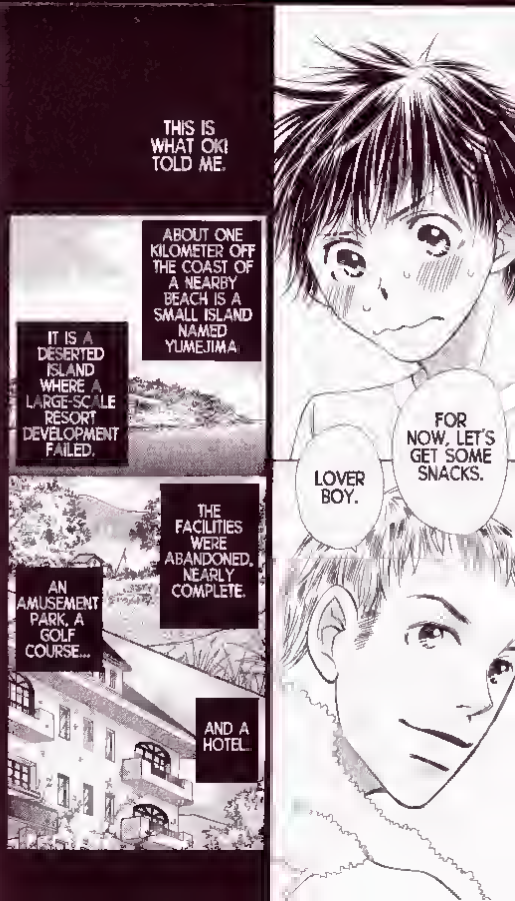

SORRY!

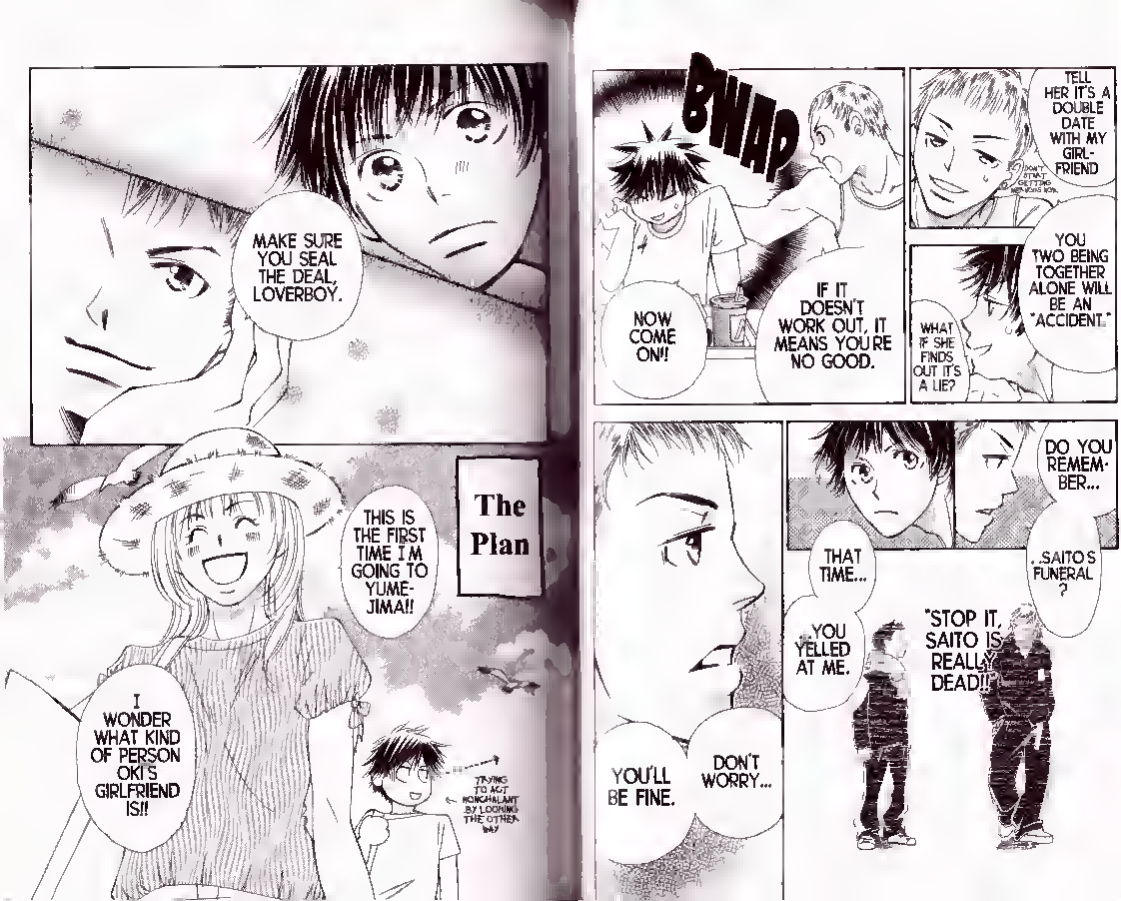
SEVERAL OF US PUT MONEY ON WHETHER YOU GUYS HAVE ALREADY DONE IT OR NOT.
AND I BET THAT YOU GUYS ALREADY DID IT, BUT...
I GUESS I WAS
WHY... WE'RE GETTING ALONG.
DO I HAVE TO BE BLUNT?
HAVE YOU GUYS DONE IT?!
BBBLOOEY
GIRLS LIKE STRONG GUYS.
THAT WAS IT.
WHETHER SHE REJECTED ME OUTRIGHT OR LET ME DOWN EASY, IT DIDN'T MATTER.
MY BIGGEST FEAR WAS TO BE LOATHED BY AKI.
SHE MIGHT ACTUALLY WANT SOME AGGRESSIVENESS.
YOU TWO...
YOU'VE BEEN GOING OUT FOR A LONG TIME, RIGHT?
AREN'T YOU WORRIED THAT HIROSE WOULD THINK THERE'S SOMETHING "LACKING" IN THE RELATIONSHIP?

THANK YOU.
AH...
IT WITHERED
NOT REALLY
WERE YOU DROWNING?
WHY ARE YOU SINKING?
I MEAN REALLY?
OK!?!
HOW ARE YOU?
HOW'RE THINGS WITH HIROSE?
I GUESS IT'S BECAUSE WE'RE IN DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS AT SCHOOL
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN SO LONG


A PLACE WHERE YOU'LL BE SURE TO DO IT.
WHAT ?!
I KNOW THIS GUY THAT'S TARGETING AKI.
I'M ON THE JUDO TEAM...
...AND THERE'S A 3RD YEAR NAMED TACHIBANA.
HE'S A PLAYER THAT'S HAD LOTS OF GIRLS.
TEENY EYES
IN FACT ...
DO YOU UNDER-STAND ?
FRIEND
THAT'S HOW YOU GUYS ARE
IN OTHER PEOPLE'S EYES...
I HAVE NO CHANCE OF WINNING...
DO YOU WANT ME TO TAKE YOU TO A PLACE...
REMEMBER OKI? I HAPPENED TO RUN INTO HIM AT THE POOL.
AND HE INVITED US.
I'LL TELL YOU MORE ABOUT IT OVER THE PHONE TOMOR-ROW.
KCHAK
BYE.
AKI? ARE YOU FEELING BETTER?
HEY, THIS IS KIND OF SUDDEN, BUT NEXT WEDNESDAY ...
DO YOU WANT TO GO CAMPING OVERNIGHT?

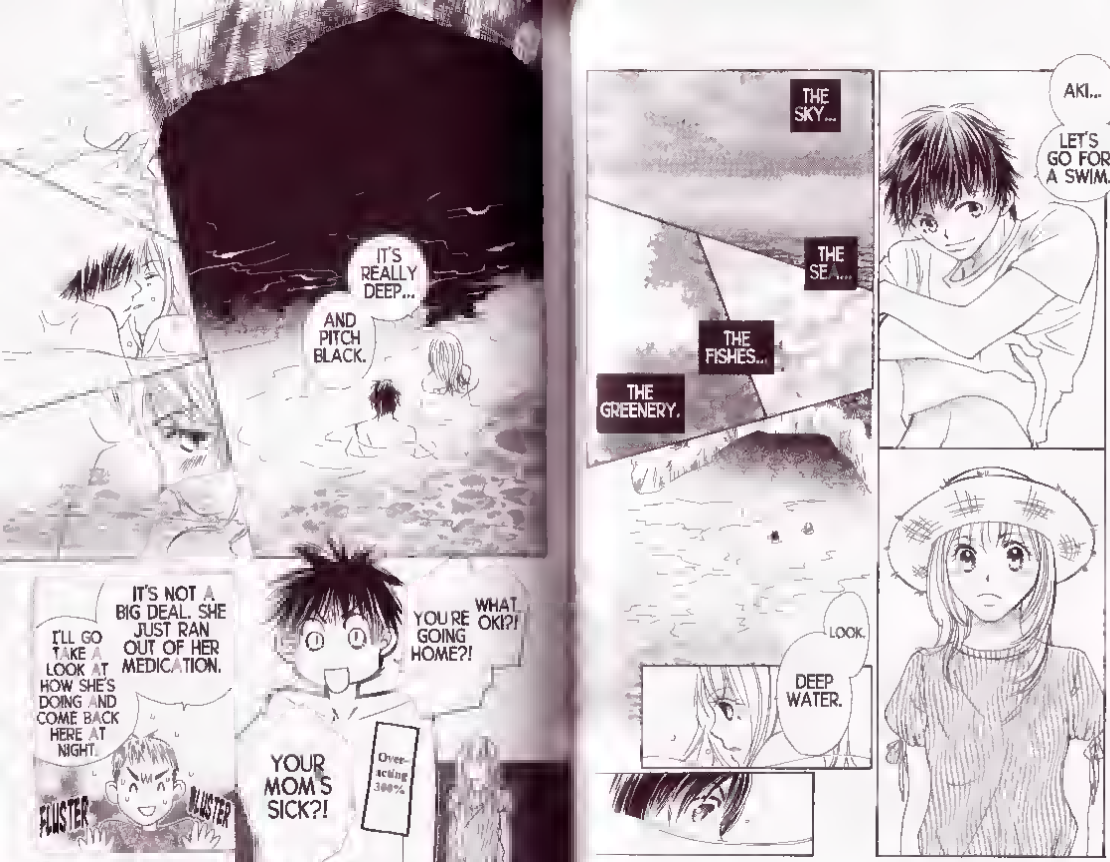

SEVEN BURGERS ?
I HAD TWO
THEY CAN USE THE HOTEL AS MUCH AS THEY WANT
SO WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO DO?
THERE'S NO ELECTRICITY OR OTHER STUFF, BUT THERE IS A BED
MY OLDER BROTHER AND HIS GIRLFRIEND GO ACROSS TO YUMEJIMA ON THE WEEKENDS
WE HAVE A BOAT.
YOU KNOW HOW MY FAMILY CULTURES PEARLS
I'LL PICK YOU UP THE FOLLOWING MORNING
I'LL MAKE UP SOME REASON AND GO BACK.
WHAT WILL YOU DO IN THE MEANTIME?
SO AKI AND I ARE GOING TO STAY THERE BY OURSELVES?
AND...
HOW DO I GET AKI TO COME ALONG?
THERE'S NOTHING TO IT.
IT'S ALL UP TO YOU.
...FOR ONE WHOLE NIGHT...
YOU HAVE HIROSE ALL TO YOURSELF...

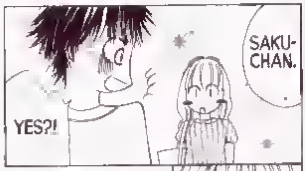

THIS IS WHAT OKI TOLD ME.
ABOUT ONE KILOMETER OFF THE COAST OF A NEARBY BEACH IS A SMALL ISLAND NAMED YUMEJIMA.
IT IS A DESERTED ISLAND WHERE A LARGE-SCALE RESORT DEVELOPMENT FAILED.
THE FACILITIES WERE ABANDONED, NEARLY COMPLETE.
AN AMUSEMENT PARK, A GOLF COURSE...
AND A HOTEL.
LOVER BOY.
FOR NOW, LET'S GET SOME SNACKS.

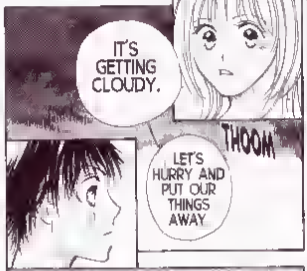

MAKE SURE YOU SEAL THE DEAL, LOVERBOY.
The Plan
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'M GOING TO YUME-JIMA!!
I WONDER WHAT KIND OF PERSON OKI'S GIRLFRIEND IS!!
TRYING TO ACT NONCHALANT BY LOOKING THE OTHER WAY
BWAP
NOW COME ON!!
IF IT DOESN'T WORK OUT, IT MEANS YOU'RE NO GOOD.
TELL HER IT'S A DOUBLE DATE WITH MY GIRL-FRIEND
I DON'T START GETTING NERVOUS NOW.
YOU TWO BEING TOGETHER ALONE WILL BE AN "ACCIDENT."
WHAT IF SHE FINDS OUT IT'S A LIE?
YOU'LL BE FINE.
DON'T WORRY...
DO YOU REMEM-BER...
...SAITO'S FUNERAL?
THAT TIME...
...YOU YELLED AT ME.
"STOP IT, SAITO IS REALLY DEAD!!"

AH... REALLY?
OKI AND HIS GIRLFRIEND HAVE BEEN THERE SO MANY TIMES!
YUMEJIMA IS REALLY NEARBY.
SHE'S EVEN SAYING, "YUMEJIMA AGAIN?"
YEAH, YEAH.
WHEW!
PUT PUT PUT PUT PUT PUT
Depart-ure
I'M GOING FISHING.
WE'LL MEET HERE AT NOON.
OKAY ☆
WOW!
THE WATER GETS SO MUCH CLEARER A BIT OFF THE COAST!!

OH? WHERE'S YOUR GIRLFRIEND?
YO, HIROSE!!
GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, OKI!
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?
TODAY IS THE ONLY DAY THE BOAT IS FREE!!
OH, BUT..
NO!!
WE SHOULD GO ANYWAY!!
AKI!!
BUT I FEEL BAD FOR HER...
WELL, ALL OF A SUDDEN...
...SOME-THING CAME UP...
THEN IT'S TOO BAD, BUT I GUESS WE HAVE TO CANCEL TODAY
DID IT?

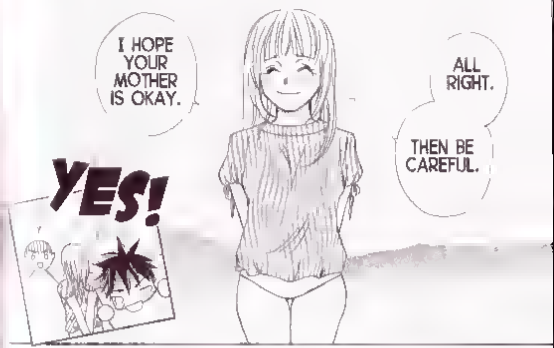

THE SKY...
THE SEA...
THE FISHES...
THE GREENERY.
AKI...
LET'S GO FOR A SWIM.
LOOK.
DEEP WATER.
IT'S REALLY DEEP...
AND PITCH BLACK.
WHAT. OK!?
YOU'RE GOING HOME?!
YOUR MOM'S SICK?!
Over-acting 300%
IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL. SHE JUST RAN OUT OF HER MEDICATION.
I'LL GO TAKE A LOOK AT HOW SHE'S DOING AND COME BACK HERE AT NIGHT.
FLUSTER
FLUSTER

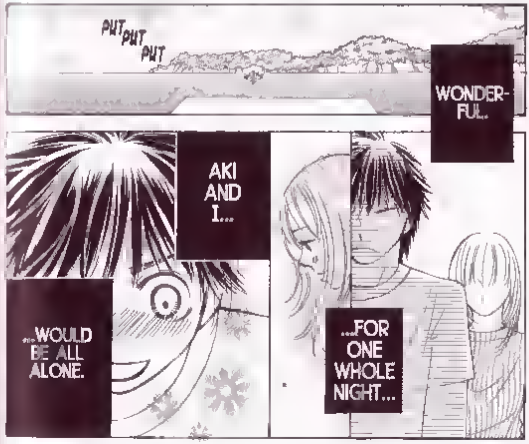


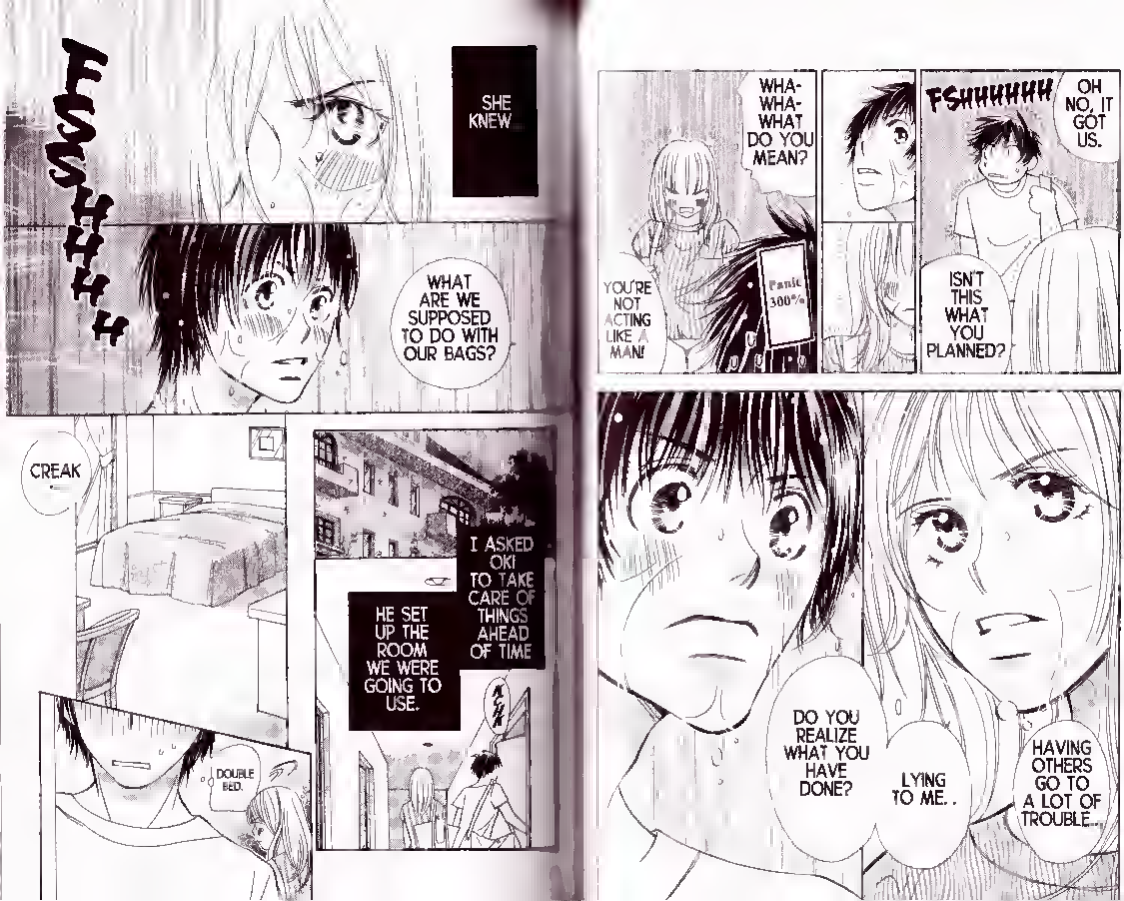


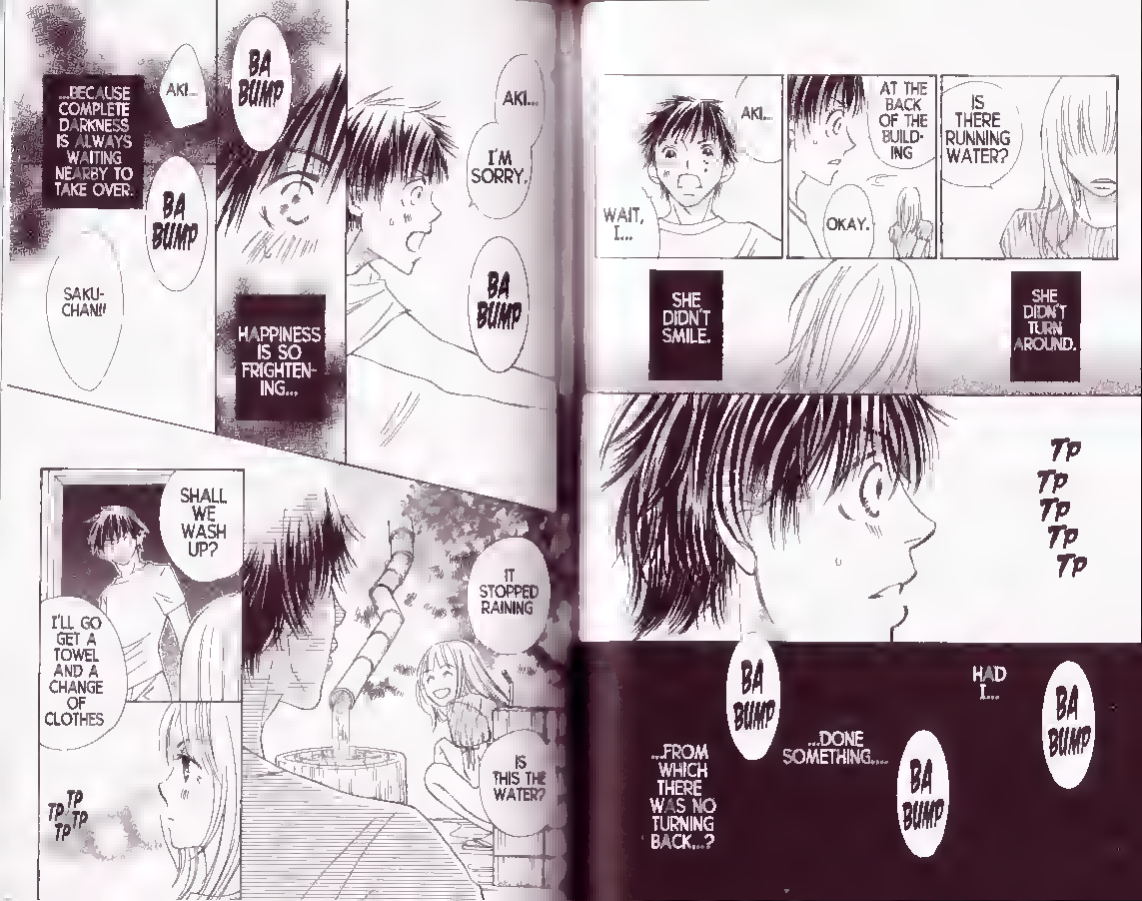
I COULDN'T LOOK AT AKI'S FACE ANYMORE.

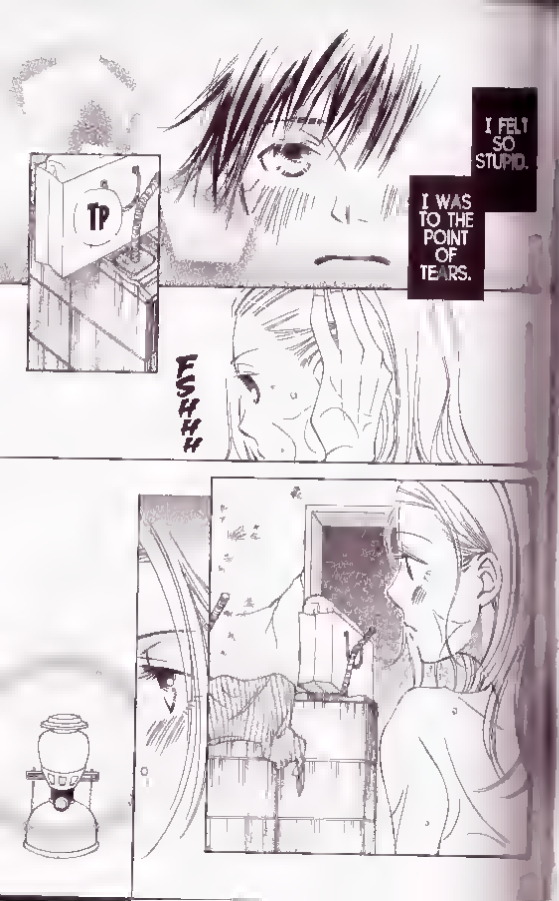
BUT I SAW HER BODY AS IF IT WERE SHINING!!



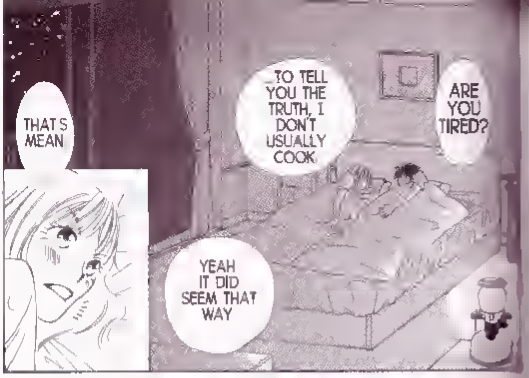


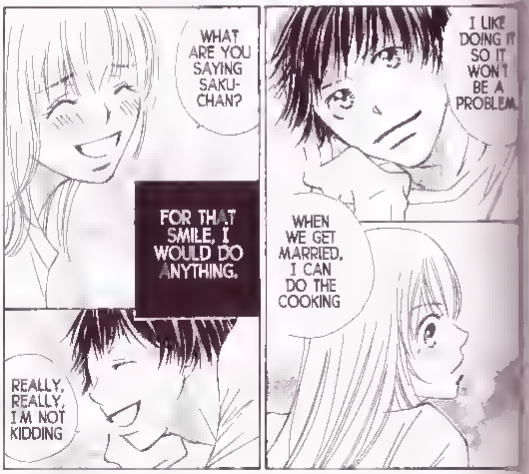

FSSHHHH
SHE KNEW
WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO WITH OUR BAGS?
CREAK
DOUBLE BED.
HE SET UP THE ROOM WE WERE GOING TO USE.
I ASKED OKI TO TAKE CARE OF THINGS AHEAD OF TIME
AHH
WHA-WHA-WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU'RE NOT ACTING LIKE A MAN!
Panic 300%
FSHHHHHH
OH NO, IT GOT US.
ISN'T THIS WHAT YOU PLANNED?
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU HAVE DONE?
LYING TO ME..
HAVING OTHERS GO TO A LOT OF TROUBLE...

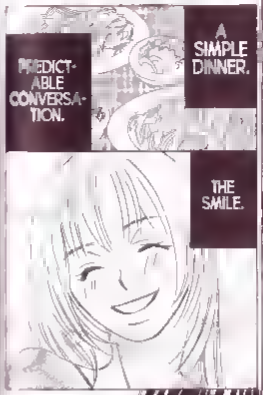

...BECAUSE COMPLETE DARKNESS IS ALWAYS WAITING NEARBY TO TAKE OVER.
AKI...
BA BUMP
BA BUMP
SAKU-CHAN!!
HAPPINESS IS SO FRIGHTEN-ING...
AKI...
I'M SORRY.
BA BUMP
WAIT, I...
AKI...
AT THE BACK OF THE BUILD-ING
OKAY.
IS THERE RUNNING WATER?
SHE DIDN'T SMILE.
SHE DIDN'T TURN AROUND.
SHALL WE WASH UP?
I'LL GO GET A TOWEL AND A CHANGE OF CLOTHES
TP TP TP TP
IT STOPPED RAINING
IS THIS THE WATER?
TP TP TP TP TP
BA BUMP
...FROM WHICH THERE WAS NO TURNING BACK...?
...DONE SOMETHING...
BA BUMP
HAD I...
BA BUMP


I FELT SO STUPID.
I WAS TO THE POINT OF TEARS.
TP
FSHHH

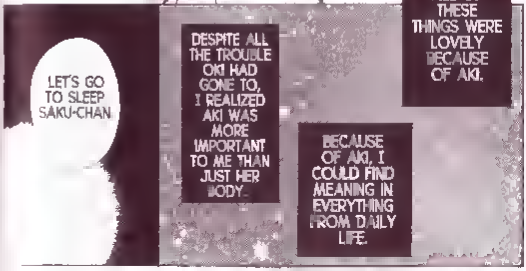
I WAS BEING SO STUPID.
WHY DID I RUSH THINGS?
IF I LOST AKI, I'D HAVE NOTHING LEFT.
AKI...
FSHHHH

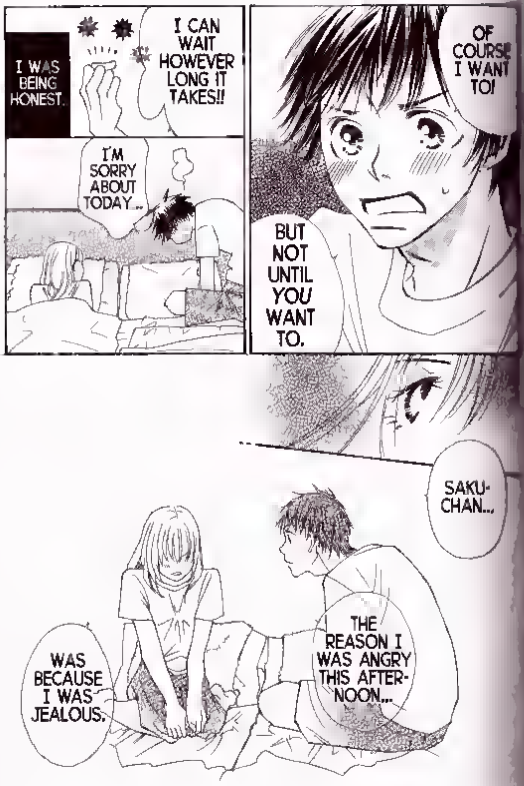

THAT'S MEAN
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I DON'T USUALLY COOK.
ARE YOU TIRED?
YEAH IT DID SEEM THAT WAY

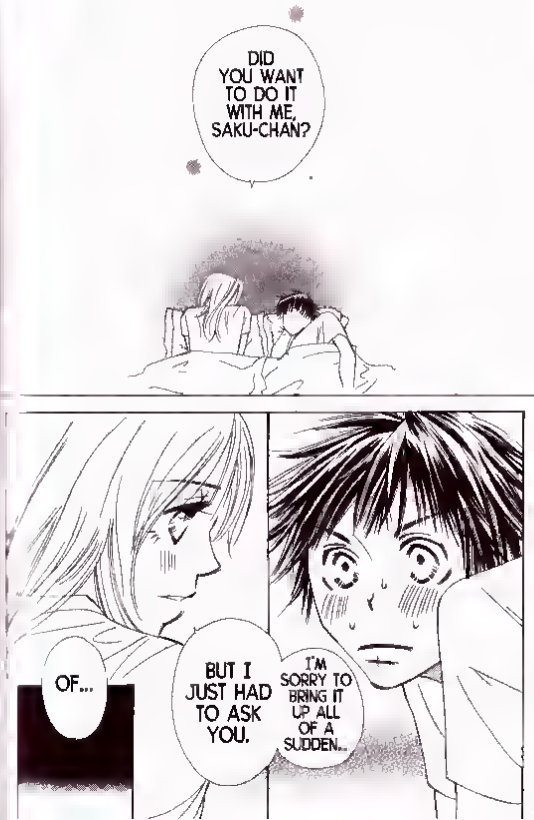

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING SAKU-CHAN?
FOR THAT SMILE, I WOULD DO ANYTHING.
REALLY, REALLY, I'M NOT KIDDING
I LIKE DOING IT SO IT WON'T BE A PROBLEM.
WHEN WE GET MARRIED, I CAN DO THE COOKING

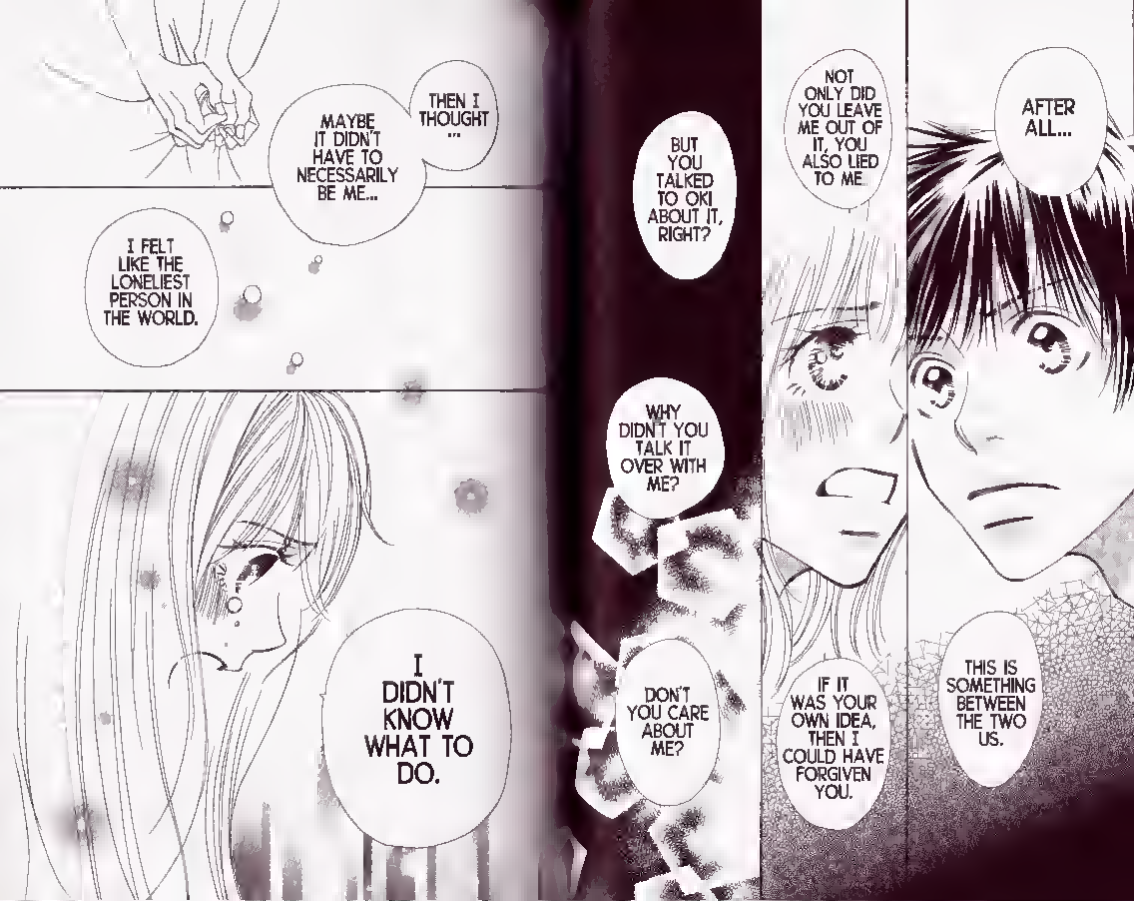

PREDICT-ABLE CONVERSA-TION.
A SIMPLE DINNER.
THE SMILE.

FWSHH


LET'S GO TO SLEEP SAKU-CHAN
DESPITE ALL THE TROUBLE OKI HAD GONE TO, I REALIZED AKI WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN JUST HER BODY.
BECAUSE OF AKI, I COULD FIND MEANING IN EVERYTHING FROM DAILY LIFE.
ALL OF THESE THINGS WERE LOVELY BECAUSE OF AKI.


I WAS BEING HONEST.
I CAN WAIT HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES!!
I'M SORRY ABOUT TODAY...
OF COURSE I WANT TO!
BUT NOT UNTIL YOU WANT TO.
SAKU-CHAN...
THE REASON I WAS ANGRY THIS AFTER-NOON...
WAS BECAUSE I WAS JEALOUS.


DID YOU WANT TO DO IT WITH ME, SAKU-CHAN?
I'M SORRY TO BRING IT UP ALL OF A SUDDEN...
BUT I JUST HAD TO ASK YOU.
OF...


I FELT LIKE THE LONELIEST PERSON IN THE WORLD.
MAYBE IT DIDN'T HAVE TO NECESSARILY BE ME...
THEN I THOUGHT ...
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT ME?
WHY DIDN'T YOU TALK IT OVER WITH ME?
BUT YOU TALKED TO OKI ABOUT IT, RIGHT?
IF IT WAS YOUR OWN IDEA, THEN I COULD HAVE FORGIVEN YOU.
NOT ONLY DID YOU LEAVE ME OUT OF IT, YOU ALSO LIED TO ME.
THIS IS SOMETHING BETWEEN THE TWO US.
AFTER ALL...

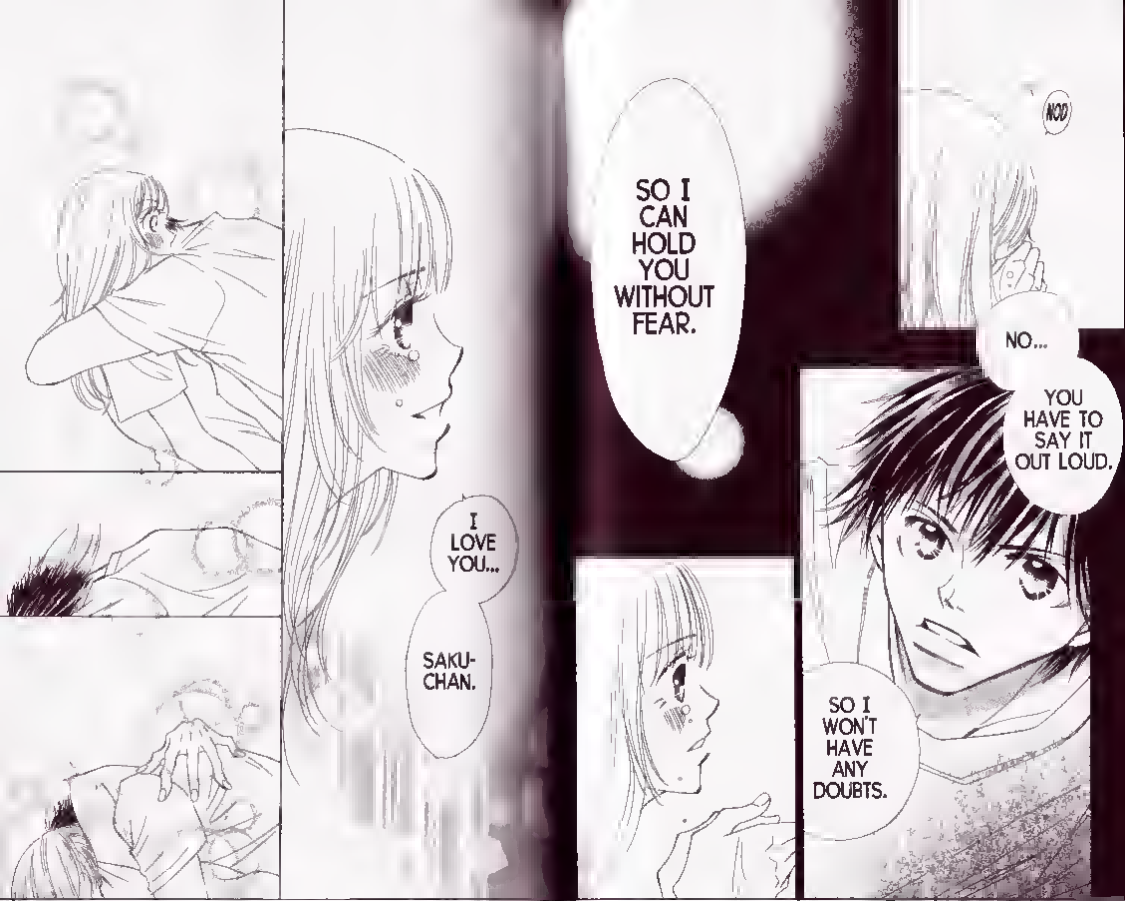
THIS WAS THE SECOND TIME I SAW HER CRY.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

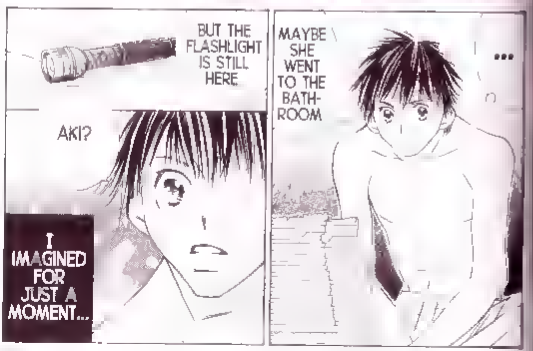
SAKU-CHAN, YOU'RE ALL I HAVE.

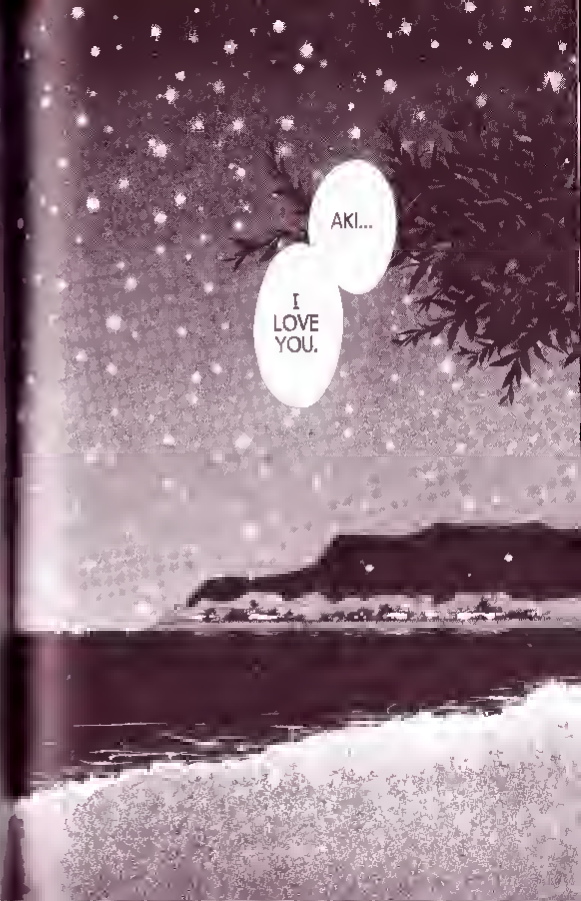
THE LAST TIME SHE CRIED WAS WHEN HER FAVORITE TEACHER DIED.

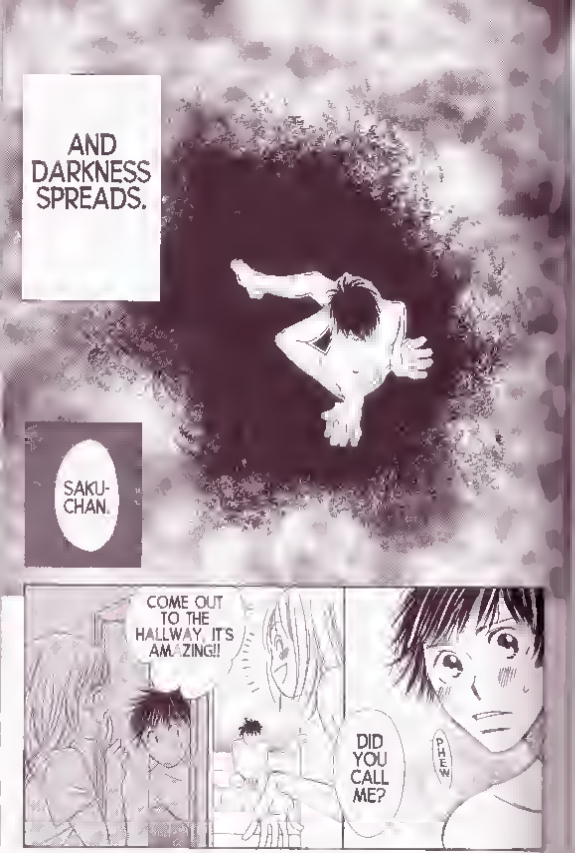
AKI'S LOVE FACED ME WITH THE SAME WEIGHT AS ANOTHER'S DEATH.

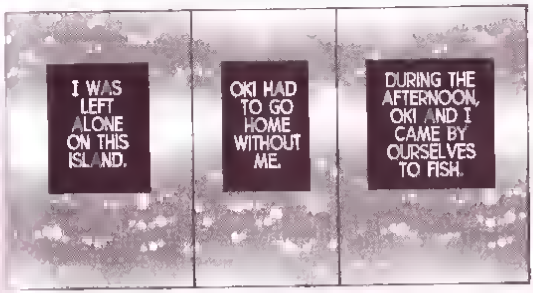

NOD
NO...
YOU HAVE TO SAY IT OUT LOUD.
SO I WON'T HAVE ANY DOUBTS.
SO I CAN HOLD YOU WITHOUT FEAR.
I LOVE YOU...
SAKU-CHAN.

AKI IS NOT HERE
THE LANTERN'S OFF
IT'S BRIGHT EVEN WITH JUST THE LIGHT OF THE STARS
HER SPOT IS COLD

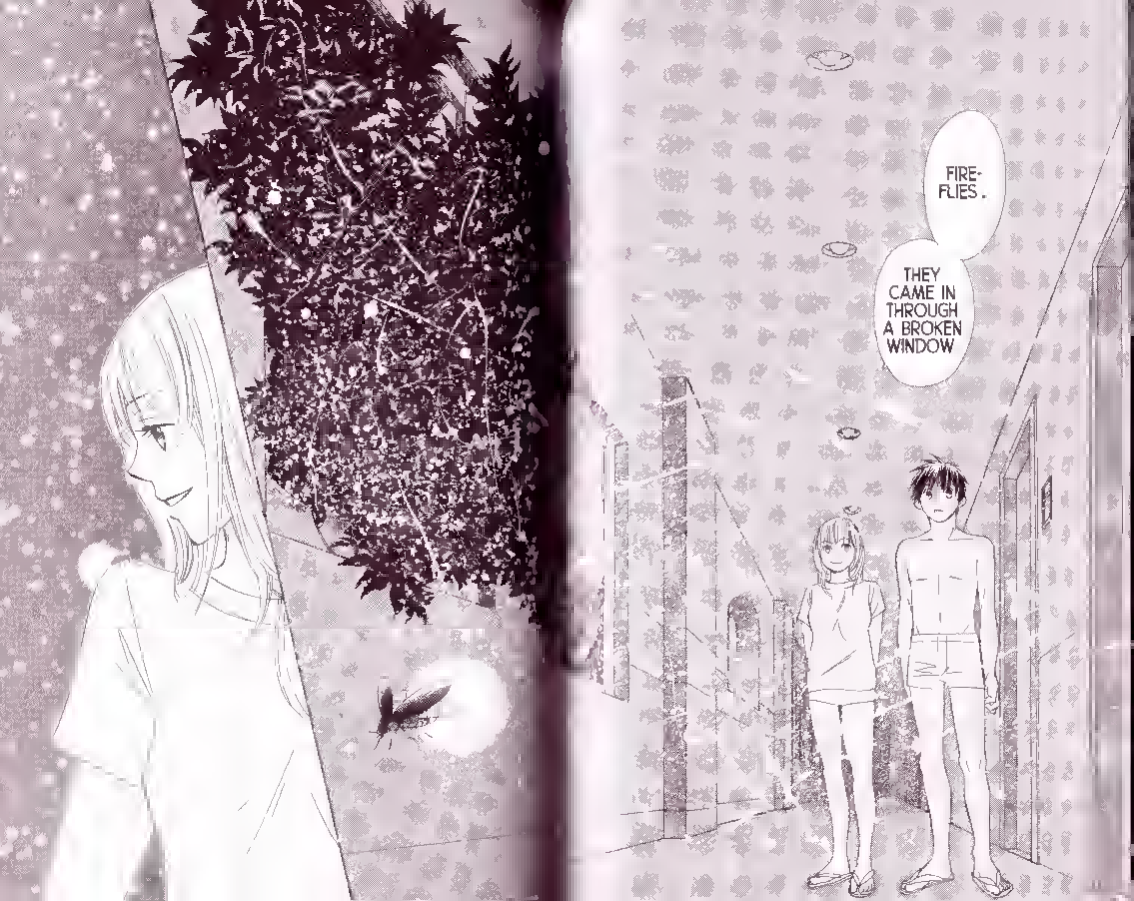

BUT THE FLASHLIGHT IS STILL HERE
MAYBE SHE WENT TO THE BATH-ROOM
...
AKI?
I IMAGINED FOR JUST A MOMENT...

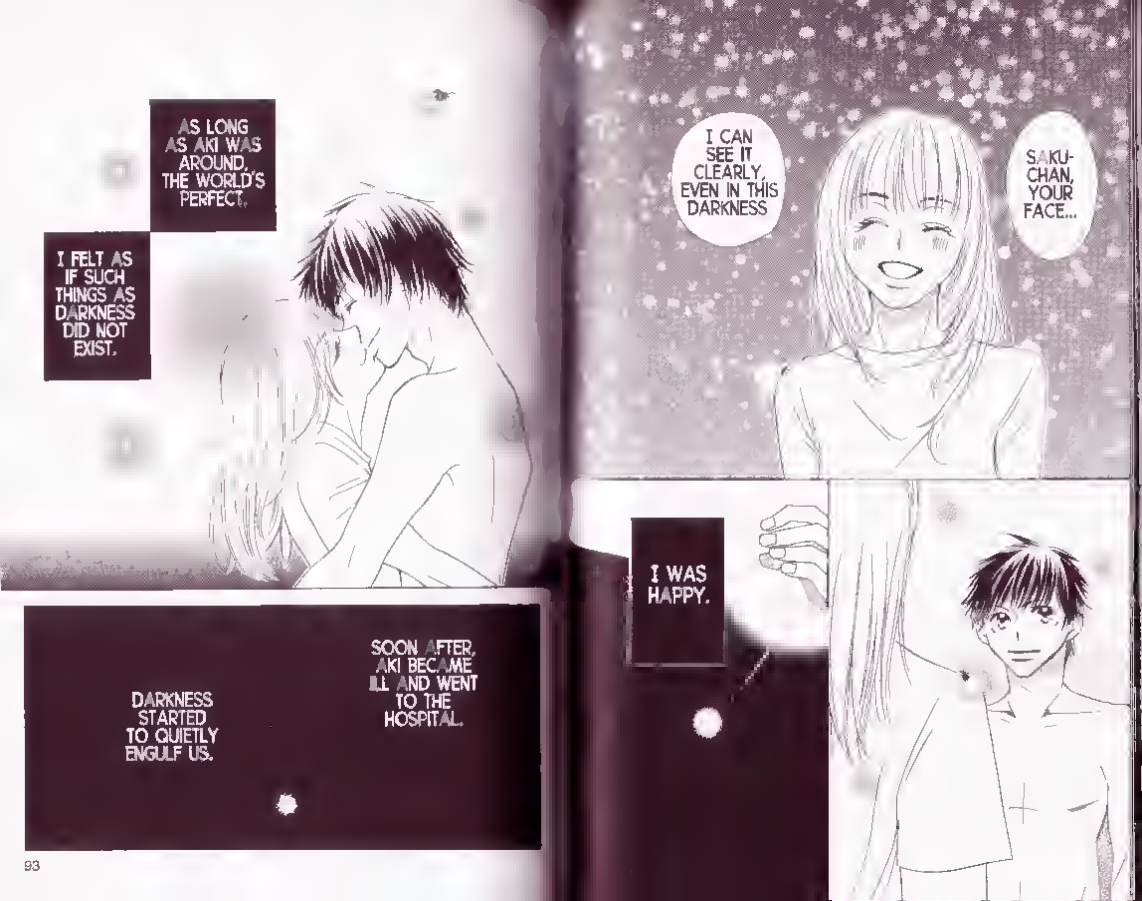

AKI...
I LOVE YOU.

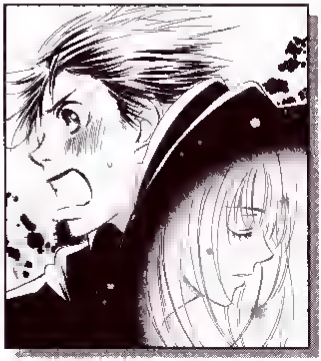

AND DARKNESS SPREADS.
SAKU-CHAN.
COME OUT TO THE HALLWAY. IT'S AMAZING!!
DID YOU CALL ME?
PHEW

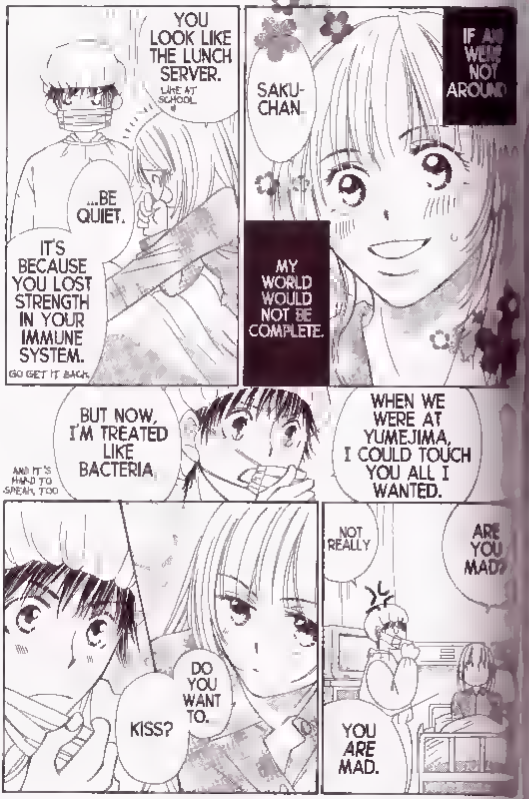

I WAS LEFT ALONE ON THIS ISLAND.
OKI HAD TO GO HOME WITHOUT ME.
DURING THE AFTERNOON, OKI AND I CAME BY OURSELVES TO FISH.

THE GIRL NAMED AKI...
...DID NOT EXIST IN THIS WORLD.


FIRE-FLIES.
THEY CAME IN THROUGH A BROKEN WINDOW

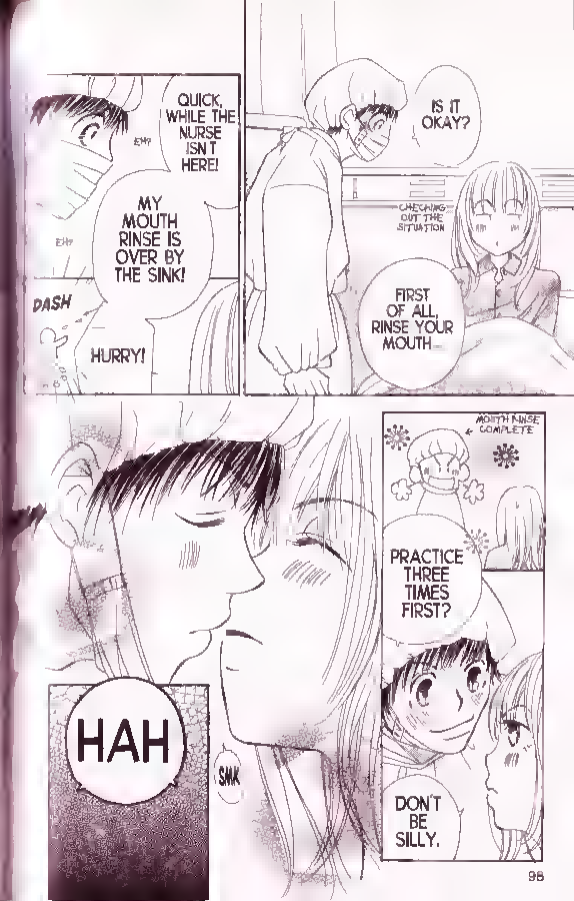

AS LONG AS AKI WAS AROUND, THE WORLD'S PERFECT.
I FELT AS IF SUCH THINGS AS DARKNESS DID NOT EXIST.
DARKNESS STARTED TO QUIETLY ENGULF US.
SOON AFTER, AKI BECAME ILL AND WENT TO THE HOSPITAL.
I WAS HAPPY.
I CAN SEE IT CLEARLY, EVEN IN THIS DARKNESS
SAKU-CHAN, YOUR FACE...

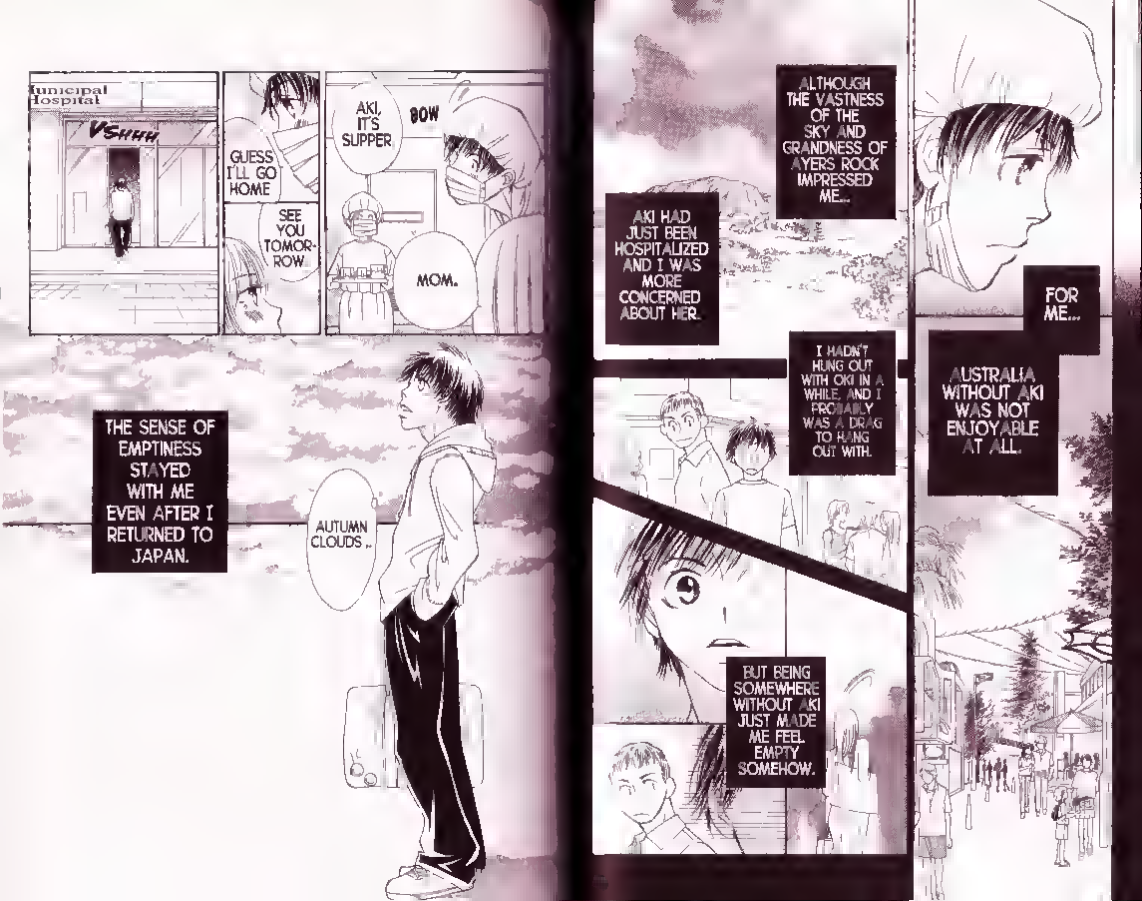


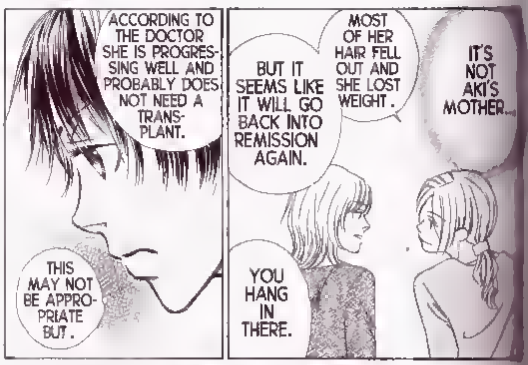

YOU LOOK LIKE THE LUNCH SERVER.
LIKE AT SCHOOL.
...BE QUIET.
IT'S BECAUSE YOU LOST STRENGTH IN YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM.
GO GET IT BACK.
SAKU-CHAN.
IF AKI WERE NOT AROUND
MY WORLD WOULD NOT BE COMPLETE.
BUT NOW, I'M TREATED LIKE BACTERIA.
AND IT'S HARD TO SPEAK, TOO
WHEN WE WERE AT YUMEJIMA, I COULD TOUCH YOU ALL I WANTED.
KISS?
DO YOU WANT TO.
NOT REALLY
ARE YOU MAD?
YOU ARE MAD.

IT WAS RIGHT BEFORE THE DEPARTURE FOR OUR CLASS TRIP TO AUSTRALIA.
SHE WAS HOSPITAL-IZED A HALF-MONTH AFTER THAT NIGHT AT YUMEJIMA.
TEN DAYS HAD PASSED SINCE AKI WAS ADMITTED FOR "APLASTIC ANEMIA."
THIS STRING BACK HERE...
IT'S SUCH A PAIN.
MAYBE I'M JUST CLUMSY
HARDS WASHER AND STERILIZER
AKI AND I HAD BEEN GOING OUT SINCE FALL OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR.
BUT SOME-THING HAD CHANGED AFTER THE TRIP TO YUMEJIMA.
I FELT I SAW AKI MORE CLEARLY THAN EVER BEFORE.
CAP AND A MASK SET
unicipal
ospital

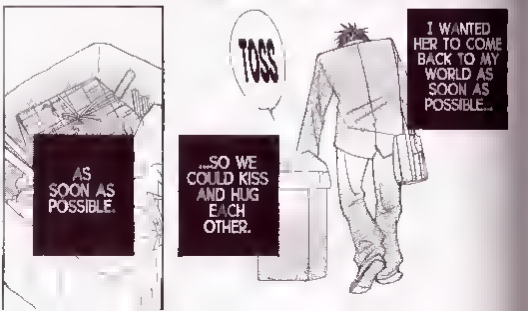
AHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!
..ME TOO.
MY BODY IS SHAKING--!
FWP FWP
I REALLY WANTED TO GO TO AUSTRALIA ...
...WITH YOU, SAKU-CHAN.
WE'LL GO ON OUR HONEY-MOON.
RIGHT, RIGHT.
AND SHE SEEMED TO BE IN GOOD SPIRITS.
APLASTIC ANEMIA IS IN THE CATEGORY OF INTRACTABLE DISEASES, BUT AKI'S CASE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MILD...

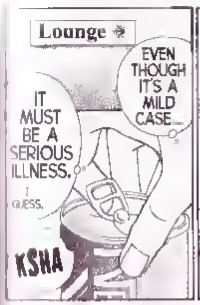

QUICK, WHILE THE NURSE ISN'T HERE!
EH?
MY MOUTH RINSE IS OVER BY THE SINK!
DASH
HURRY!
IS IT OKAY?
CHECKING OUT THE SITUATION
FIRST OF ALL, RINSE YOUR MOUTH.
MOUTH RINSE COMPLETE
PRACTICE THREE TIMES FIRST?
DON'T BE SILLY.
HAH
SMK


Municipal Hospital
VSHHH
GUESS I'LL GO HOME
SEE YOU TOMOR-ROW.
AKI, IT'S SUPPER
BOW
MOM.
THE SENSE OF EMPTINESS STAYED WITH ME EVEN AFTER I RETURNED TO JAPAN.
AUTUMN CLOUDS ..
AKI HAD JUST BEEN HOSPITALIZED AND I WAS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT HER.
ALTHOUGH THE VASTNESS OF THE SKY AND GRANDNESS OF AYERS ROCK IMPRESSED ME...
I HADN'T HUNG OUT WITH OKI IN A WHILE. AND I PROBABLY WAS A DRAG TO HANG OUT WITH.
BUT BEING SOMEWHERE WITHOUT AKI JUST MADE ME FEEL EMPTY SOMEHOW.
FOR ME...
AUSTRALIA WITHOUT AKI WAS NOT ENJOYABLE AT ALL.

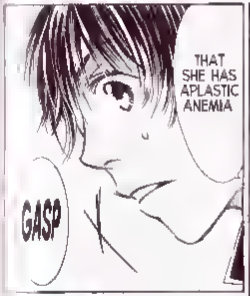

ACCORDING TO THE DOCTOR SHE IS PROGRESSING WELL AND PROBABLY DOES NOT NEED A TRANSPLANT.
THIS MAY NOT BE APPROPRIATE BUT.
BUT IT SEEMS LIKE IT WILL GO BACK INTO REMISSION AGAIN.
MOST OF HER HAIR FELL OUT AND SHE LOST WEIGHT.
YOU HANG IN THERE.
IT'S NOT AKI'S MOTHER...

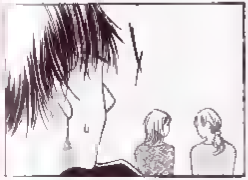
AKI DOESN'T BELONG HERE IN SUCH A DARK PLACE.


AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
...SO WE COULD KISS AND HUG EACH OTHER.
TOSS
I WANTED HER TO COME BACK TO MY WORLD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE...

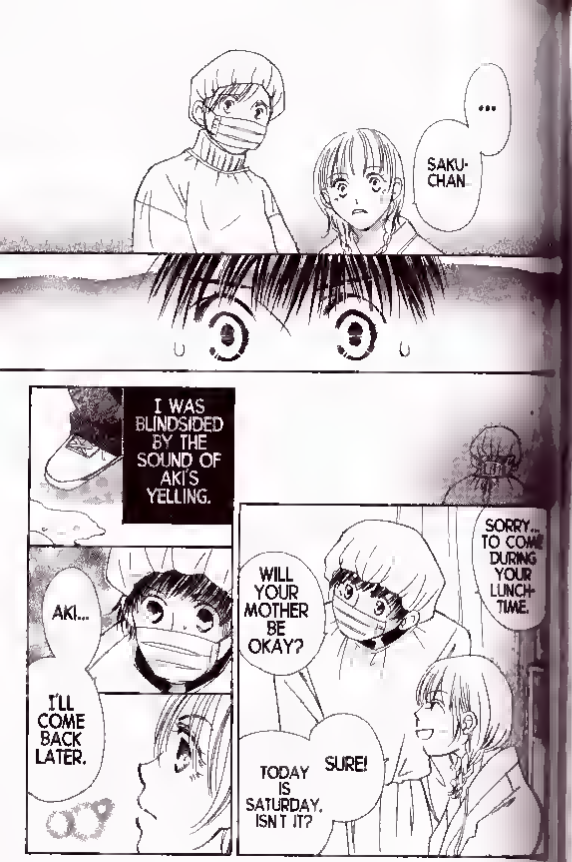

Lounge
IT MUST BE A SERIOUS ILLNESS. I GUESS.
EVEN THOUGH IT'S A MILD CASE...
KSHA

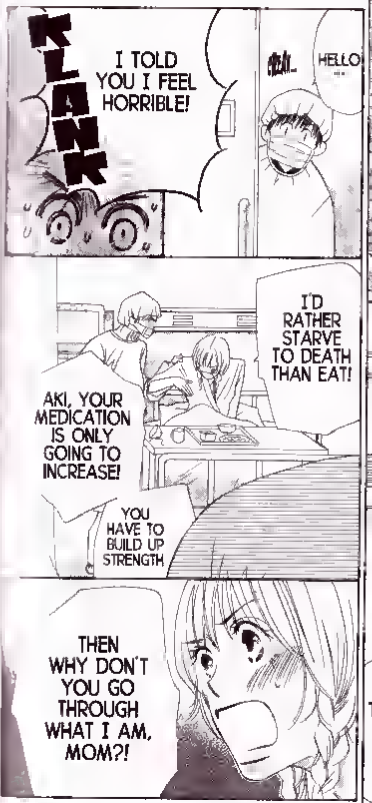
...
GIFT
Aki Hirose
503
No Visitors


THAT SHE HAS APLASTIC ANEMIA
GASP

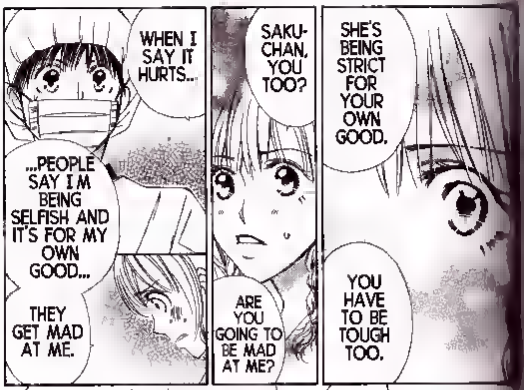


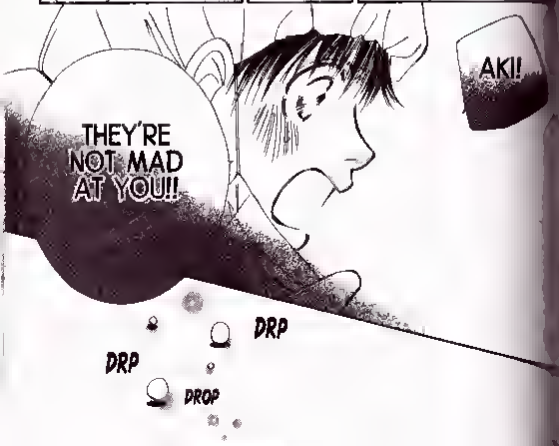
HAVE YOU TOLD HER YET?
NO...
...BUT I AM PLANNING TO TELL HER THAT IT'S LEUKEMIA.
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN TELLING HER?

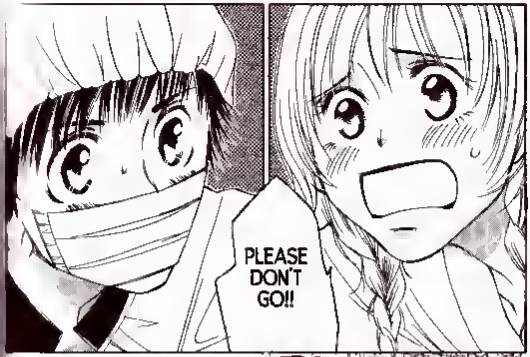

...
SAKU-CHAN
I WAS BLINDSIDED BY THE SOUND OF AKI'S YELLING.
AKI...
I'LL COME BACK LATER.
SORRY... TO COME DURING YOUR LUNCH-TIME.
WILL YOUR MOTHER BE OKAY?
SURE!
TODAY IS SATURDAY, ISN'T IT?


KLANK
I TOLD YOU I FEEL HORRIBLE!
click
HELLO
I'D RATHER STARVE TO DEATH THAN EAT!
AKI, YOUR MEDICATION IS ONLY GOING TO INCREASE!
YOU HAVE TO BUILD UP STRENGTH
THEN WHY DON'T YOU GO THROUGH WHAT I AM, MOM?!

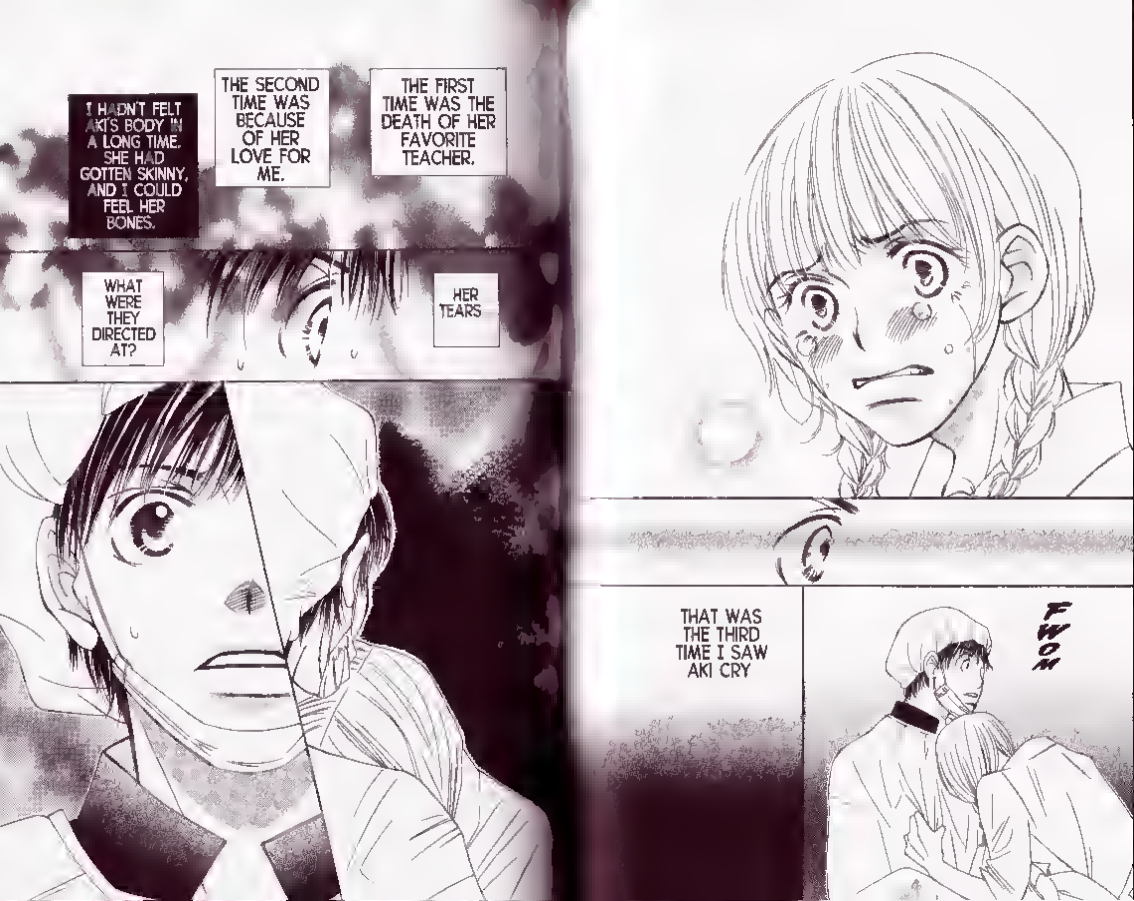
FSHH
COME BACK AND BE MY AKI AGAIN.
FSHH
FSHH
Municipal Hospital
VISITORS ARE ALLOWED TODAY!
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FIVE DAYS!!


WHEN I SAY IT HURTS...
...PEOPLE SAY I'M BEING SELFISH AND IT'S FOR MY OWN GOOD...
THEY GET MAD AT ME.
SAKU-CHAN, YOU TOO?
ARE YOU GOING TO BE MAD AT ME?
SHE'S BEING STRICT FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.
YOU HAVE TO BE TOUGH TOO.


AKI!
THEY'RE NOT MAD AT YOU!!
DRP
DRP
DROP

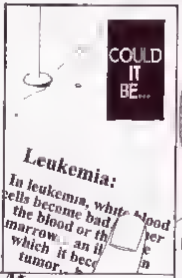

PLEASE DON'T GO!!

PSSSSSS
Municipal
.....
YOU'RE GETTING AN INTRAVENOUS DRIP INJECTION. GASP! IN THE CLAVICLE?
I'M RECEIVING MY MEDICATION THIS WAY NOW.
DON'T YOU FEEL SORRY FOR HER?
YOUR MOTHER..


I HADN'T FELT AKI'S BODY IN A LONG TIME. SHE HAD GOTTEN SKINNY, AND I COULD FEEL HER BONES.
THE SECOND TIME WAS BECAUSE OF HER LOVE FOR ME.
THE FIRST TIME WAS THE DEATH OF HER FAVORITE TEACHER.
WHAT WERE THEY DIRECTED AT?
HER TEARS
THAT WAS THE THIRD TIME I SAW AKI CRY
FWOH

KLANG
DRIP
DRIP

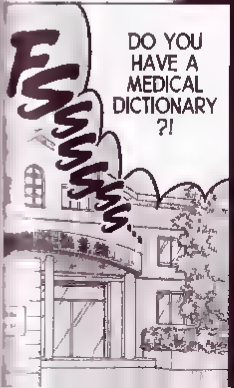
GO STRAIGHT AHEAD AND IT'LL BE ON THE TOP ROW OF THE SHELF ON THE LEFT

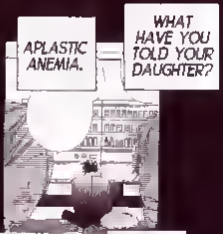

COULD IT BE...
Leukemia:
In leukemia, white blood cells become bad
the blood or th
marrow
which it
tumor.
Method of treatmen
In the situation of chemother
antitumor drug
in white blood cells results in
infections, loss of hair
effects such as inflam
of the oral muco

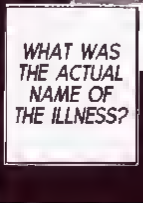
IT'S THE SAME AS THE EXPLANATION AKI GOT FROM THE DOCTOR.
BUT SHE'S LOSING HER HAIR BECAUSE OF THE TREATMENT ?
APLASTIC ANEMIA
FLIP

I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH MY HAIR IS FALLING OUT.
I'M SCARED
I FEEL REALLY NAUSEOUS.
AND I HAVE SORES IN MY MOUTH.
AND

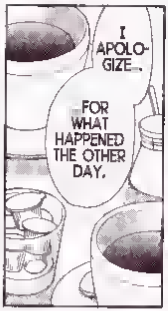
GASP!
SNIFFLE
I'M SORRY.
MY SPIRITS ARE LOW.
MAYBE IT'S THIS MEDICATION.

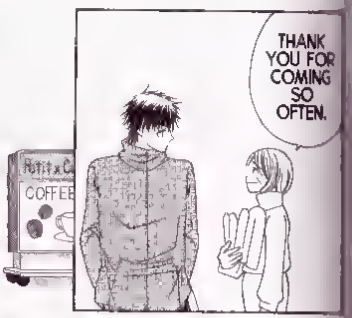

FSSSSSSS...
DO YOU HAVE A MEDICAL DICTIONARY ?!


APLASTIC ANEMIA.
WHAT HAVE YOU TOLD YOUR DAUGHTER?


WHAT WAS THE ACTUAL NAME OF THE ILLNESS?

MOST OF HER HAIR FELL OUT AND SHE LOST WEIGHT...

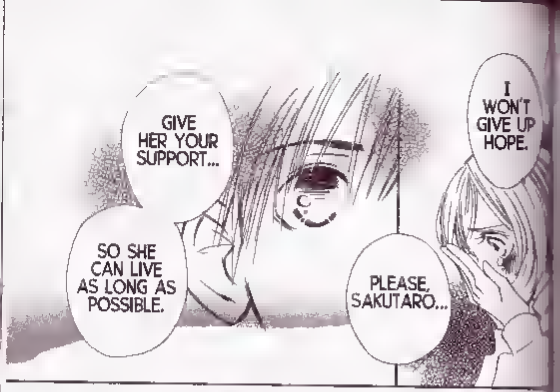

I APOLOGIZE...
FOR WHAT HAPPENED THE OTHER DAY.

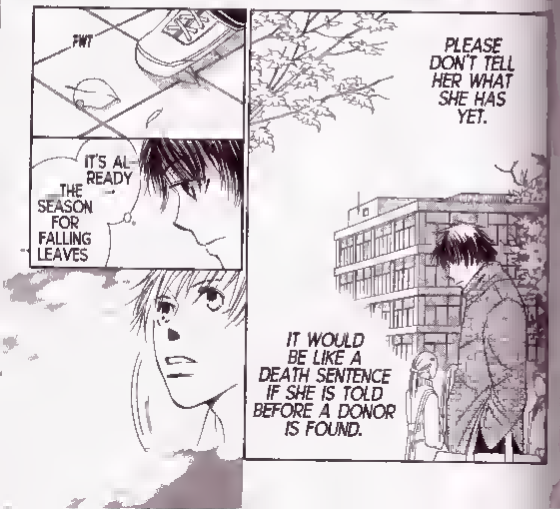

THANK YOU FOR COMING SO OFTEN.
COFFEE

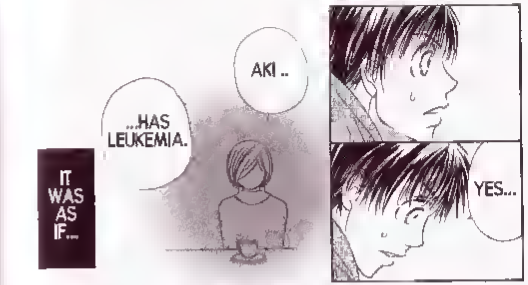
BECAUSE WE WOULD TRULY LIKE YOUR HELP...
I'M GOING TO BE HONEST WITH YOU
DO YOU KNOW WHAT LEUKEMIA IS?

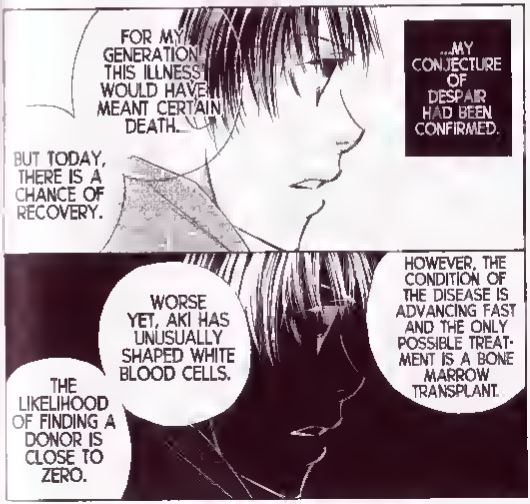
SHE'S REALLY A NICE GIRL.
I KNOW.
THANK YOU.

Aki Hirose
503
No Visitors
SAKU-TARO?


I WON'T GIVE UP HOPE.
GIVE HER YOUR SUPPORT...
SO SHE CAN LIVE AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.
PLEASE, SAKUTARO...

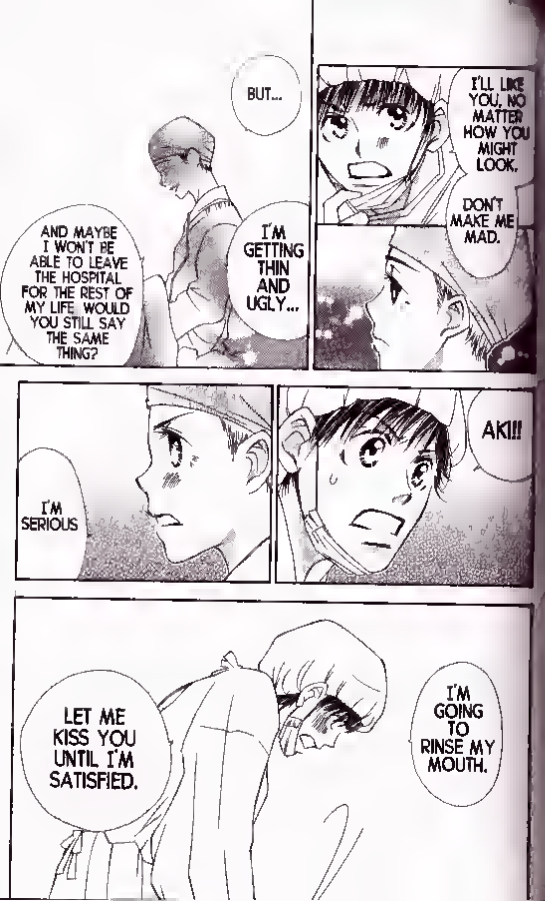

FWT
IT'S ALREADY THE SEASON FOR FALLING LEAVES
PLEASE DON'T TELL HER WHAT SHE HAS YET.
IT WOULD BE LIKE A DEATH SENTENCE IF SHE IS TOLD BEFORE A DONOR IS FOUND.

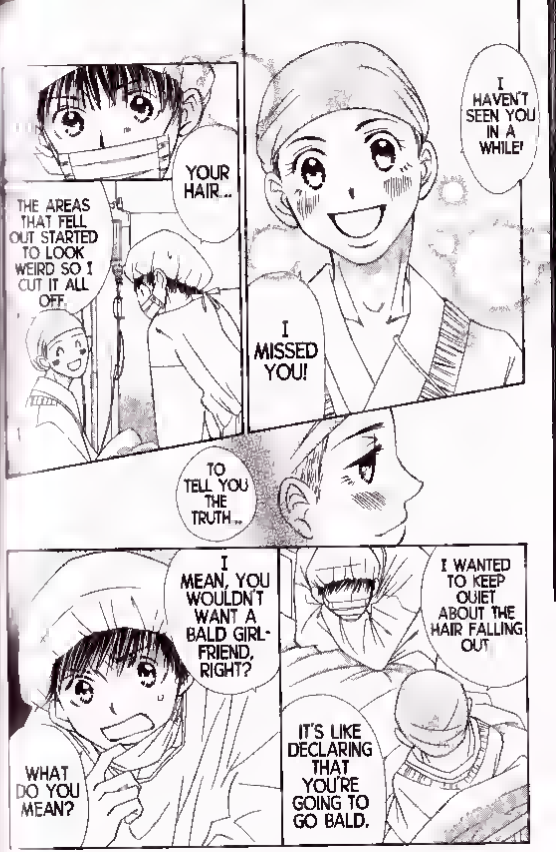

IT WAS AS IF...
...HAS LEUKEMIA.
AKI..
YES...


FOR MY GENERATION THIS ILLNESS WOULD HAVE MEANT CERTAIN DEATH.
...MY CONJECTURE OF DESPAIR HAD BEEN CONFIRMED.
BUT TODAY, THERE IS A CHANCE OF RECOVERY.
HOWEVER, THE CONDITION OF THE DISEASE IS ADVANCING FAST AND THE ONLY POSSIBLE TREATMENT IS A BONE MARROW TRANSPLANT.
WORSE YET, AKI HAS UNUSUALLY SHAPED WHITE BLOOD CELLS.
THE LIKELIHOOD OF FINDING A DONOR IS CLOSE TO ZERO.

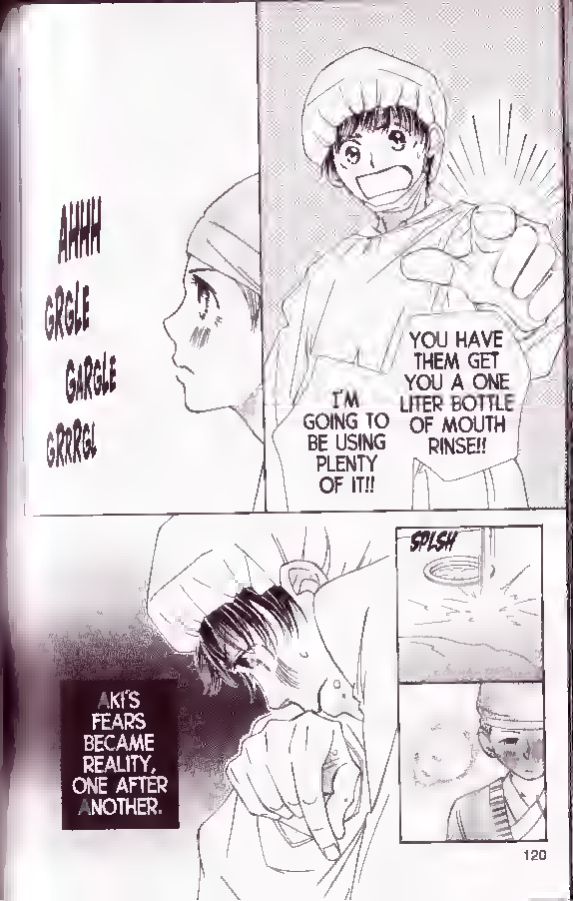
HARDSHIP, SORROW...
DURING SUCH TIMES...
WHAT WAS I TO DO?
KCHK
SAKU-CHAN!!
I HAD TO PROTECT AKI.
IT'S ABOUT AKI.
IT'S WASN'T ABOUT ME.
Municipal Hospital

THE SKY IS DARK.


BUT...
I'M GETTING THIN AND UGLY...
AND MAYBE I WON'T BE ABLE TO LEAVE THE HOSPITAL FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE. WOULD YOU STILL SAY THE SAME THING?
I'LL LIKE YOU, NO MATTER HOW YOU MIGHT LOOK.
DON'T MAKE ME MAD.
I'M SERIOUS
AK!!!
LET ME KISS YOU UNTIL I'M SATISFIED.
I'M GOING TO RINSE MY MOUTH.

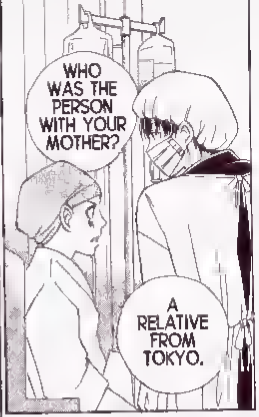

I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN A WHILE!
I MISSED YOU!
YOUR HAIR...
THE AREAS THAT FELL OUT STARTED TO LOOK WEIRD SO I CUT IT ALL OFF.
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH...
I WANTED TO KEEP QUIET ABOUT THE HAIR FALLING OUT
I MEAN, YOU WOULDN'T WANT A BALD GIRL-FRIEND, RIGHT?
IT'S LIKE DECLARING THAT YOU'RE GOING TO GO BALD.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

ALL OF HER HAIR FELL OUT.
HER SKINNY HANDS AND LEGS SWELLED WITH SICKNESS.
AND SHE COULDN'T HOLD BACK VOMITING. EVEN IN FRONT OF ME.
BOW
THANK YOU VERY MUCH
SHE BECAME INCREASINGLY MELANCHOLY AS THE DAYS PASSED.
SHE DIDN'T WANT TO KISS ME ANYMORE.


AHHH
GRGLE
GARGLE
GRRRGL
I'M GOING TO BE USING PLENTY OF IT!!
YOU HAVE THEM GET YOU A ONE LITER BOTTLE OF MOUTH RINSE!!
AKI'S FEARS BECAME REALITY, ONE AFTER ANOTHER.
SPLSH

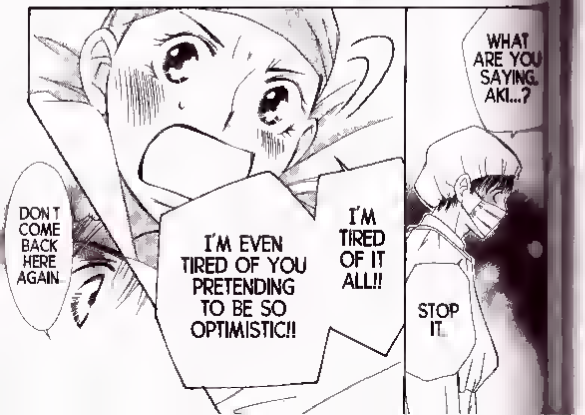
HE LAUGHED AND SAID YOU'D BE A MUMMY BY NOW IF YOU COULD BE MY BLOOD DONOR.
BAM!
I'LL GO HOME.
I GUESS...
I CURSED HOW POWERLESS I WAS.

AKI...
IT MIGHT NOT PLEASE YOU, BUT DON'T YOU THINK IT'S RUDE?
HE CAME ALL THE WAY FROM TOKYO.
BUT THAT GUY!
HE SAID THAT MY BOYFRIEND LUCKED OUT NOT HAVING THE SAME BLOOD TYPE AS MINE.

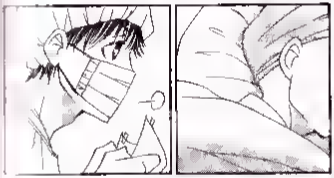

WHO WAS THE PERSON WITH YOUR MOTHER?
A RELATIVE FROM TOKYO.

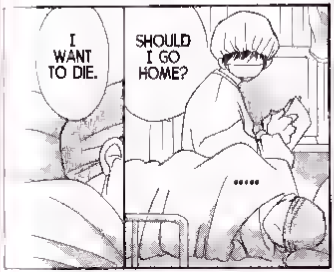
HE AGREED TO BECOME MY BLOOD TRANSFUSION DONOR, BUT...
HE ACTS AS IF I AM SO INDEBTED TO HIM.
IT MAKES ME HATE THINKING THAT PERSON'S BLOOD IS GOING TO BE IN MY BODY.
YOU'RE IN A BAD MOOD.

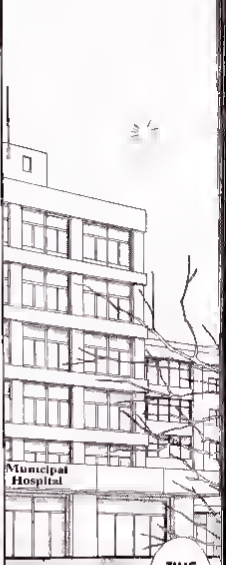
I KNOW THE TRUTH.
I'M NOT GOING TO GET BETTER, RIGHT?
IF THAT'S THE CASE, I WANT TO STOP THIS PAINFUL TREATMENT AND DIE QUICKLY.


WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, AKI...?
STOP IT.
I'M TIRED OF IT ALL!!
I'M EVEN TIRED OF YOU PRETENDING TO BE SO OPTIMISTIC!!
DON'T COME BACK HERE AGAIN.

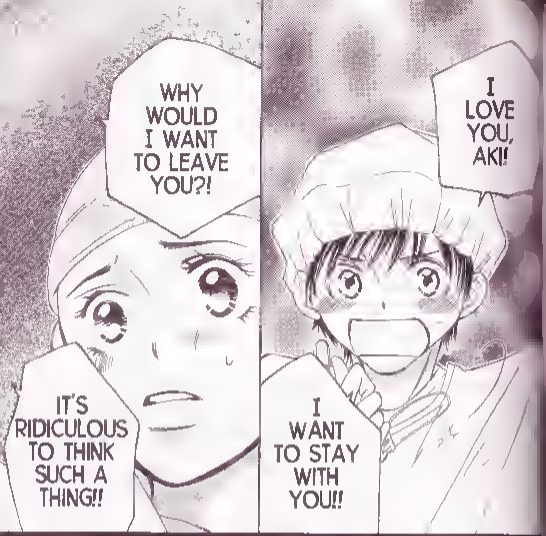
12.
WHERE SHOULD I HANG THIS?
LAST YEAR I CALLED YOU AN OLD LADY FOR BEING ONE WEEK OLDER...
AND WE GOT INTO A FIGHT
DO YOU REMEMBER ?



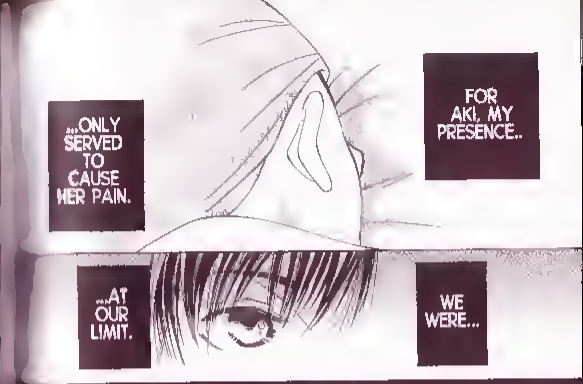

I WANT TO DIE.
SHOULD I GO HOME?
.....

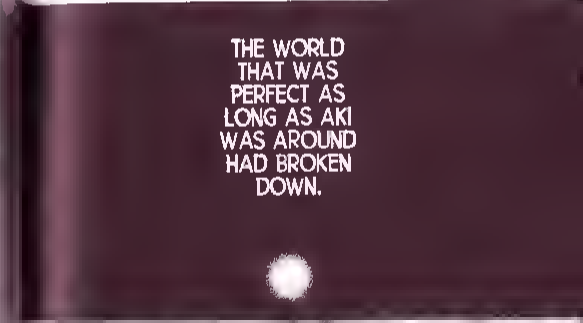

Municipal Hospital

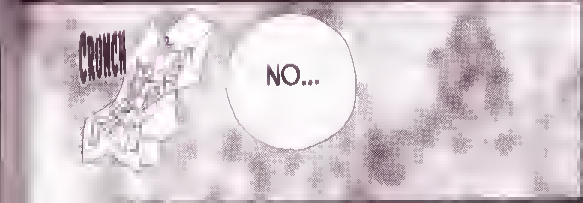
TIME PASSES SO FAST
17
Aki's Birthday
Christmas
24
Saku's birthday
IT'S ALREADY DECEMBER

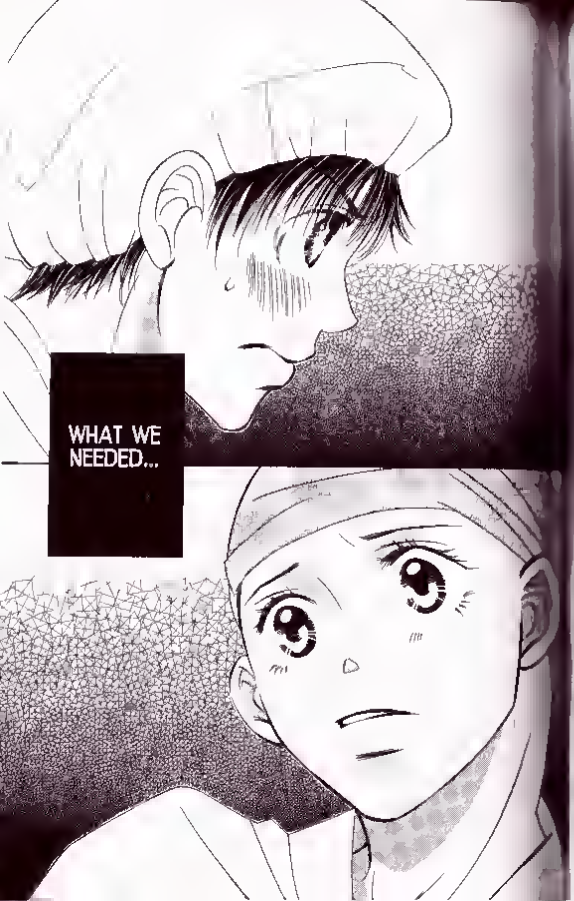

WHY WOULD I WANT TO LEAVE YOU?!
I LOVE YOU, AKI!
IT'S RIDICULOUS TO THINK SUCH A THING!!
I WANT TO STAY WITH YOU!!

LET'S GO TO AUSTRALIA.
"I REALLY WANTED TO GO TO AUSTRALIA."
"WE'LL GO ON OUR HONEY-MOON."
I WANTED TO TAKE HER AWAY FROM THERE.
BUT WHERE TO?

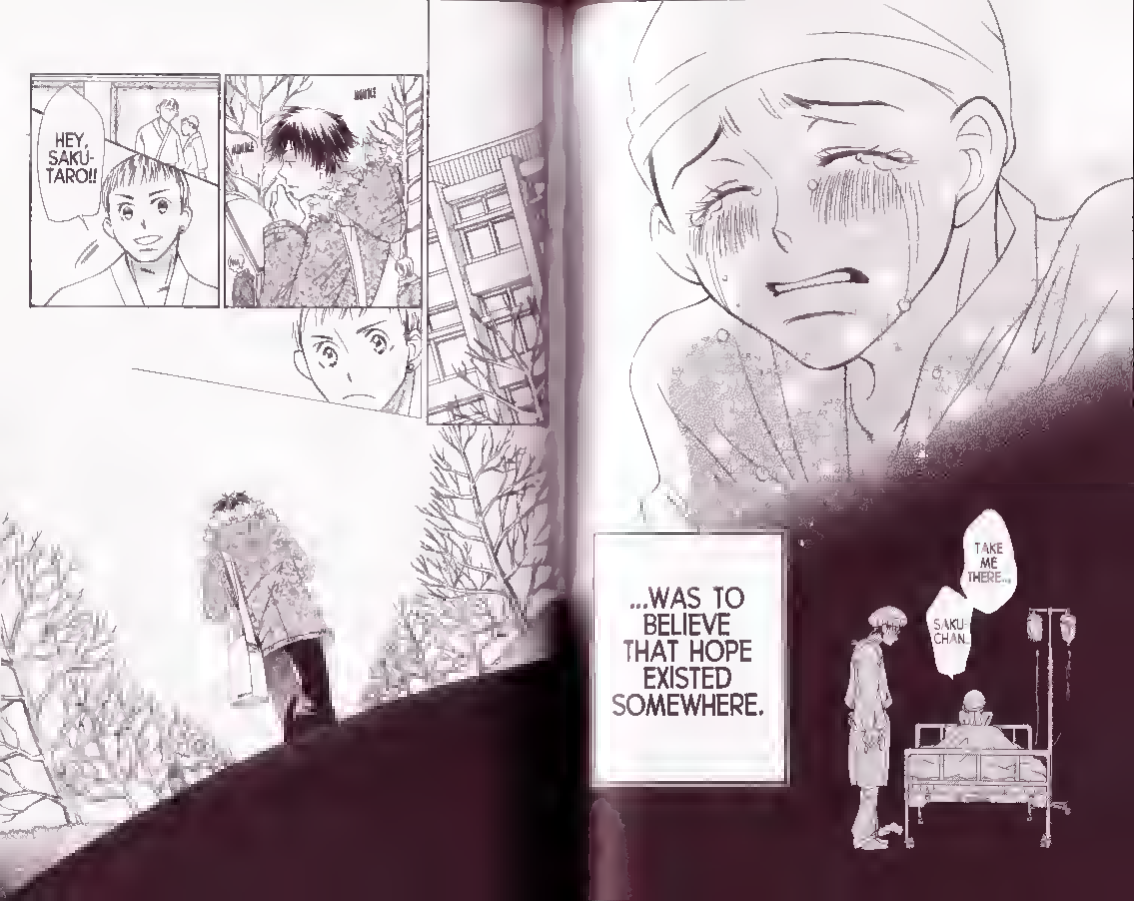

...ONLY SERVED TO CAUSE HER PAIN.
FOR AKI, MY PRESENCE..
...AT OUR LIMIT.
WE WERE...


THE WORLD THAT WAS PERFECT AS LONG AS AKI WAS AROUND HAD BROKEN DOWN.

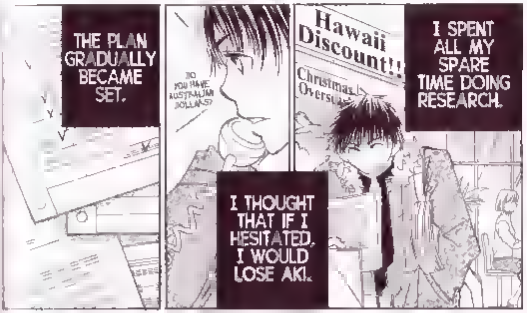

CRUNCH
NO...


WHAT WE NEEDED...

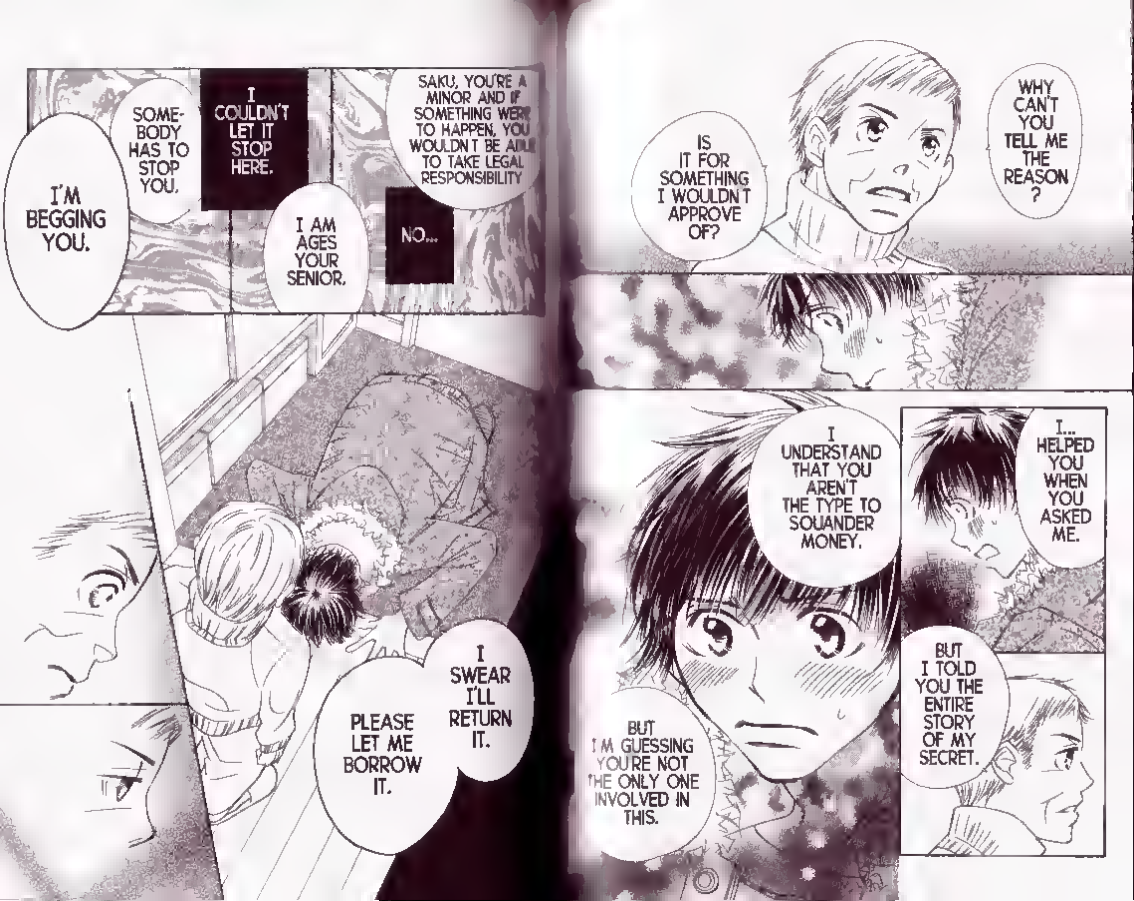
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE AND GO TO AUSTRALIA.
JUST THE TWO OF US.


HEY, SAKU-TARO!!
...WAS TO BELIEVE THAT HOPE EXISTED SOMEWHERE.
TAKE ME THERE...
SAKU-CHAN.

AFTER MY SAVINGS, HOW MUCH MORE DO I NEED?
KLK KLK
ALL THAT WAS LEFT WAS...
...TO COME UP WITH THE MONEY
JUST LET ME BORROW IT. NO QUESTIONS ASKED
I'M SORRY GRANDPA...
SAKU...
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH THAT MUCH MONEY?
LEND YOU 500,000 YEN?!

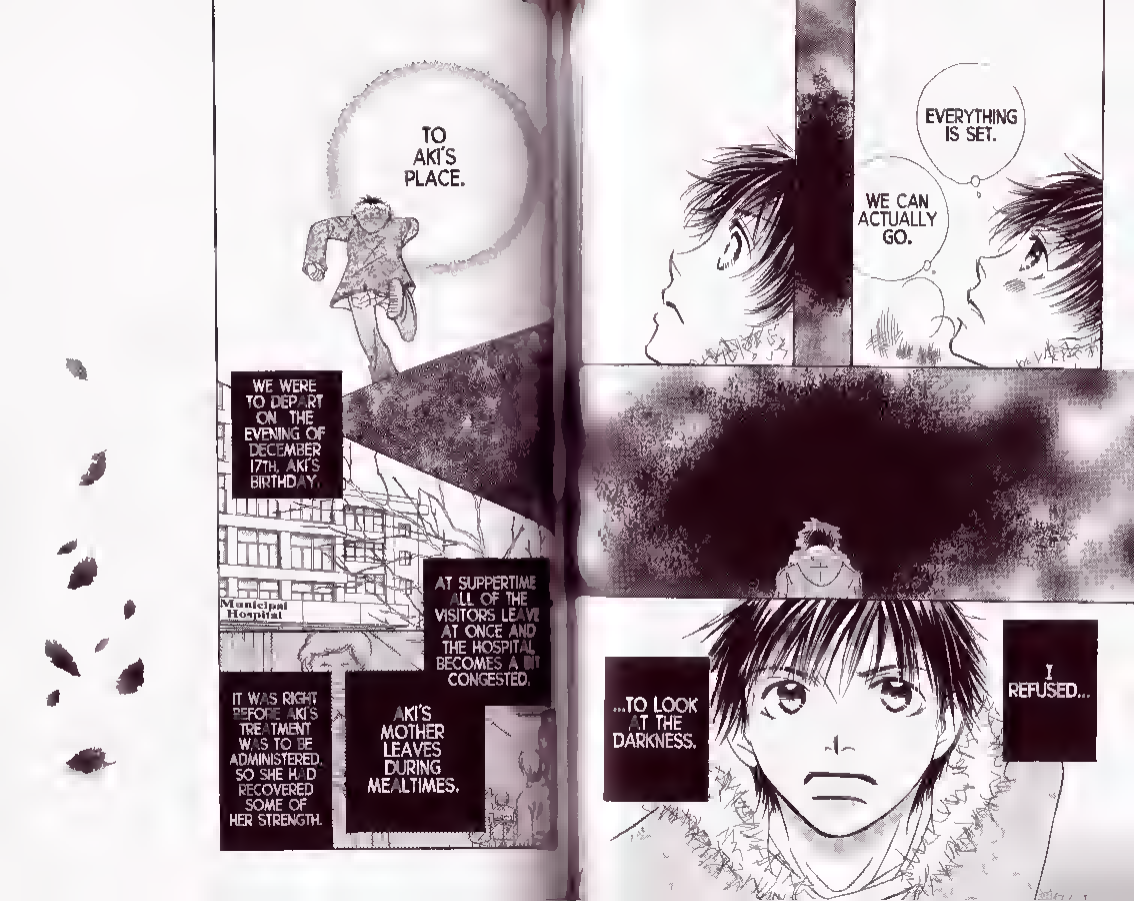

THE PLAN GRADUALLY BECAME SET.
I THOUGHT THAT IF I HESITATED, I WOULD LOSE AKI.
Hawaii Discount!!
Christmas in Oversea
I SPENT ALL MY SPARE TIME DOING RESEARCH.

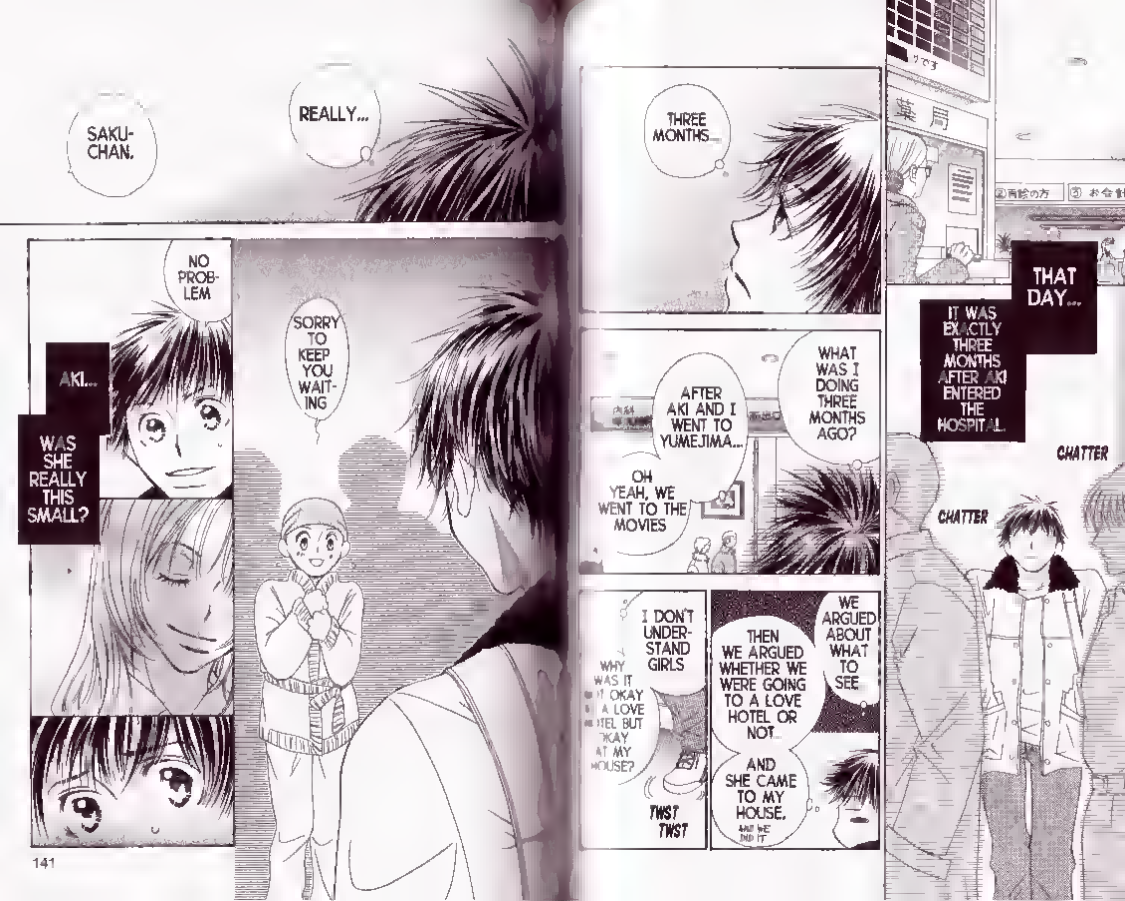
THAT WAS ENOUGH REASON FOR ME TO LIVE.


I'M BEGGING YOU.
SOMEBODY HAS TO STOP YOU.
I COULDN'T LET IT STOP HERE.
I AM AGES YOUR SENIOR.
SAKU, YOU'RE A MINOR AND IF SOMETHING WERE TO HAPPEN, YOU WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO TAKE LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY
NO...
PLEASE LET ME BORROW IT.
I SWEAR I'LL RETURN IT.
IS IT FOR SOMETHING I WOULDN'T APPROVE OF?
WHY CAN'T YOU TELL ME THE REASON?
I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU AREN'T THE TYPE TO SQUANDER MONEY.
BUT I'M GUESSING YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE INVOLVED IN THIS.
I... HELPED YOU WHEN YOU ASKED ME.
BUT I TOLD YOU THE ENTIRE STORY OF MY SECRET.

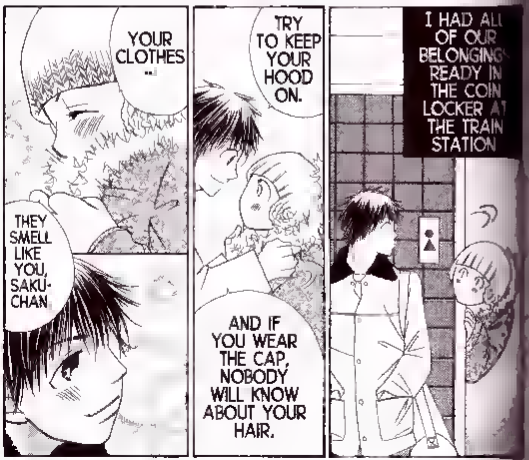
I DIDN'T WANT TO CRY.
...I'LL SAY THAT YOU TOLD ME WHY YOU NEEDED THE MONEY.
WE'RE ALREADY ACCOMPLICES ANYWAY.
YOU BE SURE TO HOLD HANDS...
...WITH THAT PRECIOUS PERSON OF YOURS.
THANK YOU, GRANDPA.

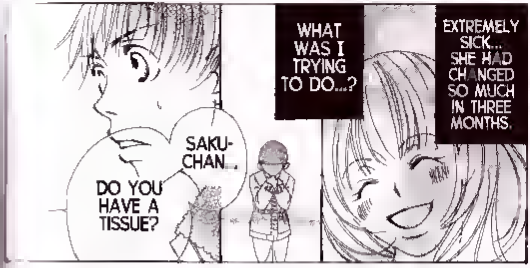
I PROMISED TO GIVE IT TO YOU AFTER YOU STARTED COLLEGE.
IT'S THE MONEY THAT GRANDMA SAVED FOR YOU, LITTLE BY LITTLE.
THERE'S ONLY ABOUT A MILLION YEN...
USE IT WISELY.
SAKU...
THE PIN CODE IS YOUR BIRTHDAY.


TO AKI'S PLACE.
WE WERE TO DEPART ON THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 17TH, AKI'S BIRTHDAY.
Municipal Hospital
AT SUPPERTIME ALL OF THE VISITORS LEAVE AT ONCE AND THE HOSPITAL BECOMES A BIT CONGESTED.
IT WAS RIGHT BEFORE AKI'S TREATMENT WAS TO BE ADMINISTERED. SO SHE HAD RECOVERED SOME OF HER STRENGTH.
AKI'S MOTHER LEAVES DURING MEALTIMES.
EVERYTHING IS SET.
WE CAN ACTUALLY GO.
...TO LOOK AT THE DARKNESS.
I REFUSED...

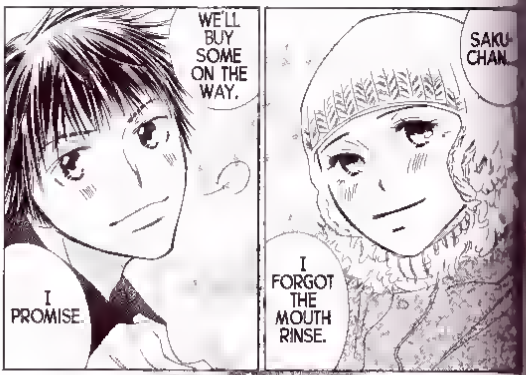

SAKU-CHAN.
REALLY...
THREE MONTHS...
THAT DAY...
IT WAS EXACTLY THREE MONTHS AFTER AKI ENTERED THE HOSPITAL.
CHATTER
CHATTER
薬局
NO PROB-LEM
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAIT-ING
AKI...
WAS SHE REALLY THIS SMALL?
AFTER AKI AND I WENT TO YUMEJIMA...
WHAT WAS I DOING THREE MONTHS AGO?
OH YEAH, WE WENT TO THE MOVIES
I DON'T UNDER-STAND GIRLS
WHY WAS IT OKAY A LOVE HOTEL BUT AT MY HOUSE?
TWST TWST
WE ARGUED ABOUT WHAT TO SEE.
THEN WE ARGUED WHETHER WE WERE GOING TO A LOVE HOTEL OR NOT.
AND SHE CAME TO MY HOUSE.
AND WE DID IT.

LET'S GO.

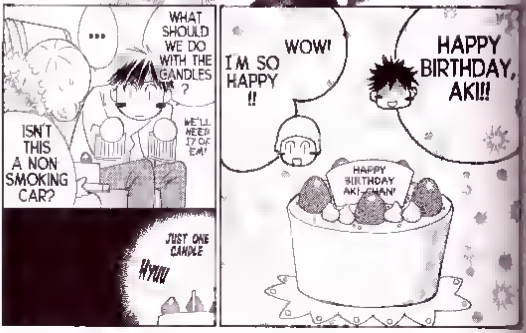

YOUR CLOTHES...
THEY SMELL LIKE YOU, SAKU-CHAN.
TRY TO KEEP YOUR HOOD ON.
AND IF YOU WEAR THE CAP, NOBODY WILL KNOW ABOUT YOUR HAIR.
I HAD ALL OF OUR BELONGINGS READY IN THE COIN LOCKER AT THE TRAIN STATION.

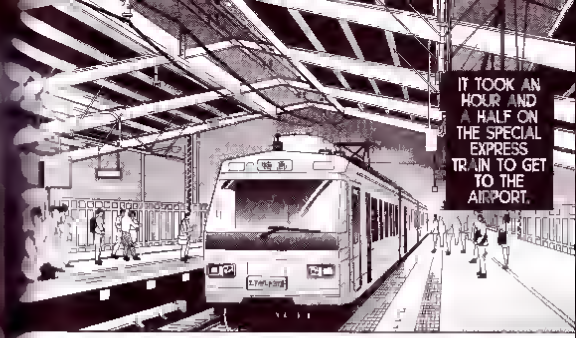

WHAT WAS I TRYING TO DO...?
SAKU-CHAN...
DO YOU HAVE A TISSUE?
EXTREMELY SICK... SHE HAD CHANGED SO MUCH IN THREE MONTHS.

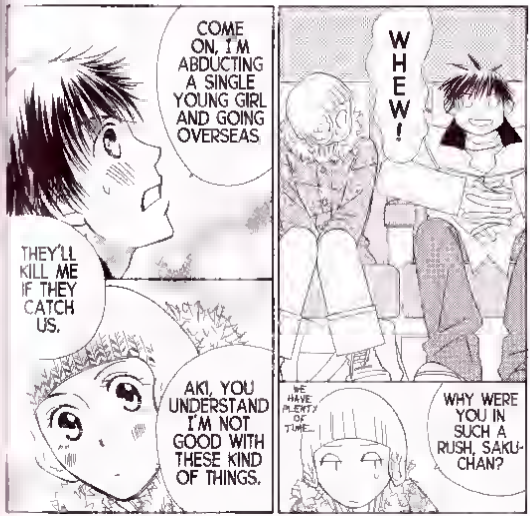
I COULDN'T COME OUT WITH MY IV STILL ON.
SO I PULLED IT OUT MYSELF.
IT STOPPED BLEEDING AND I STERILIZED IT. THAT'S WHAT THE BLOOD IS FROM.
AK!!
BLOOD...!
I'M FINE.

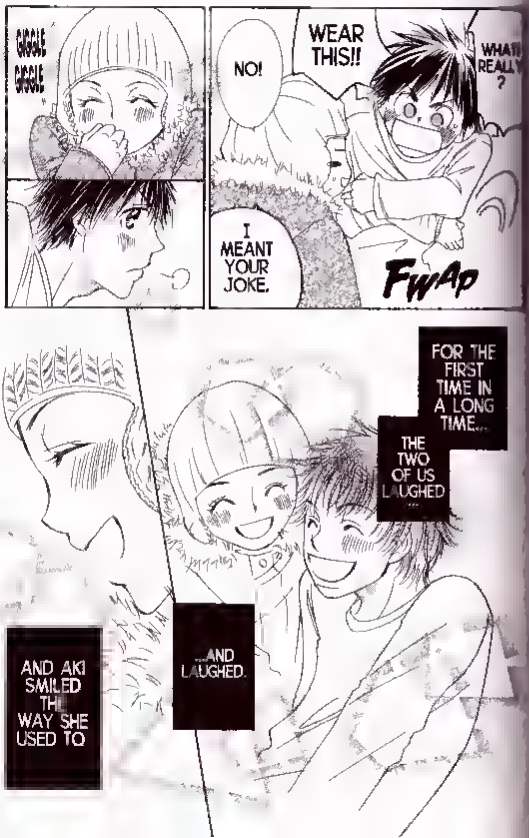

WE'LL BUY SOME ON THE WAY.
I PROMISE.
SAKU-CHAN.
I FORGOT THE MOUTH RINSE.

KIRIRI
KIRIRI


...
WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH THE CANDLES ?
WE'LL KEEP IT OF 'EM!
ISN'T THIS A NON SMOKING CAR?
JUST ONE CANDLE
HYUU
WOW!
I'M SO HAPPY !!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, AKI!!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY AKI-CHAN!


IT TOOK AN HOUR AND A HALF ON THE SPECIAL EXPRESS TRAIN TO GET TO THE AIRPORT.


COME ON, I'M ABDUCTING A SINGLE YOUNG GIRL AND GOING OVERSEAS
THEY'LL KILL ME IF THEY CATCH US.
AKI, YOU UNDERSTAND I'M NOT GOOD WITH THESE KIND OF THINGS.
WHEW!
WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME.
WHY WERE YOU IN SUCH A RUSH, SAKU-CHAN?


GIGGLE GIGGLE
NO!
WEAR THIS!!
WHAT? REALLY?
I MEANT YOUR JOKE.
FWAP
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME...
THE TWO OF US LAUGHED...
...AND LAUGHED.
AND AKI SMILED THE WAY SHE USED TO

I CAN'T WAIT.
IT WILL BE YOUR TURN NEXT WEEK.
CONGRATULATIONS.
YOU'RE 17 NOW.
DO THEY GET THEIR PRESENTS IN STOCKINGS?
THAT'S TRUE.
OH YEAH, ISN'T IT SUMMER IN AUSTRALIA FOR CHRISTMAS?
THAT'S COLD, SAKU-CHAN.
MAYBE THEY TIE UP KANGAROOS IN THEIR YARDS SO THAT THE PRESENTS CAN GO IN THEIR POCKETS.
IT'LL BE WEIRD TO SEE A BUNCH OF STOCKINGS DURING THE SEASON FOR SANDALS
AND SANTA MIGHT BE WEARING SHORT SLEEVES.

I LISTENED TO HER VOICE AS I DOZED OFF.
I WAS ALSO EXHAUSTED FROM THE EXTREME TENSION.
IT SAID HOW THE WORLD IS PERFECT AND DOES NOT LACK ANYTHING.
IN A BOOK ABOUT THE ABORIGINES ...
I READ LOTS OF BOOKS ON THAT COUNTRY.
WHILE YOU AND REST OF THE CLASS WERE AWAY IN AUSTRALIA...
IT'S KIND OF HARD TO EXPLAIN...
AFTER I READ IT, I THOUGHT IF THERE IS SUCH A THING AS HEAVEN, IT MIGHT ALREADY EXIST IN THIS WORLD.
KLAKETA KLAK

MAYBE ALL THE FUN HAD TIRED HER OUT...

AKI BARELY TOUCHED HER CAKE.

PLEASE KEEP LOOKING FOR ME.
I'LL ALWAYS BE...
...BY YOUR SIDE
I HOPED THAT THE TRAIN WOULD KEEP ON TRAVELING WITHOUT EVER REACHING ITS DESTINATION
TERNATIONAL AIRPORT
HUF
HUF
WE ARRIVED TWO HOURS BEFORE THE FLIGHT WAS SCHEDULED TO LEAVE.
JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF TIME TO CHECK IN.

IT'S DEFINITELY NOT EASY TO FIND SOMEBODY AFTER DEATH.
I MEAN PEOPLE LOSE EACH OTHER, EVEN WHEN THEY'RE STILL ALIVE.
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HEAVEN IS BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH OF AN UNDER-STANDING.
BUT, SAKU-CHAN, YOU ALWAYS SEARCH FOR ME.
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU LOSE ME.
THAT'S WHY I'M DOING OKAY...
I WONDER WHY...

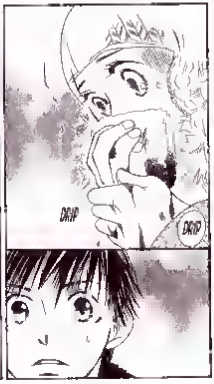
WE CAN GET A REFUND!
WE'LL GO ANOTHER TIME!
NO...
I DON'T WANT TO BE SEPARATED FROM YOU!!
SAKU-CHAN...
PLEASE...

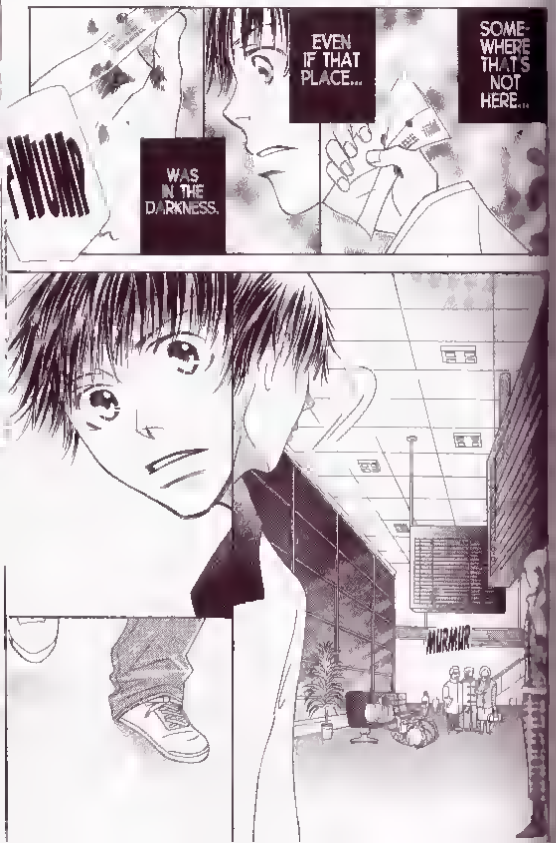
DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING THAT I CAN APPLY PRESSURE WITH?
YEAH.

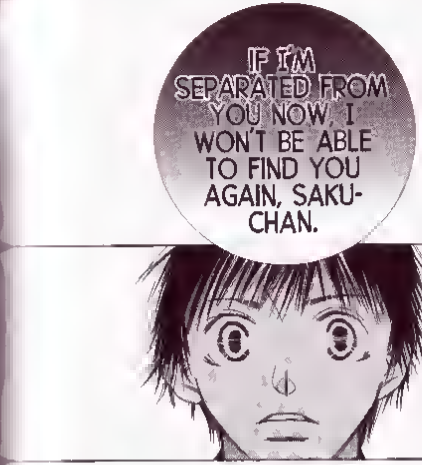
SAKU-CHAN, WAIT...
NOSE-BLEED...

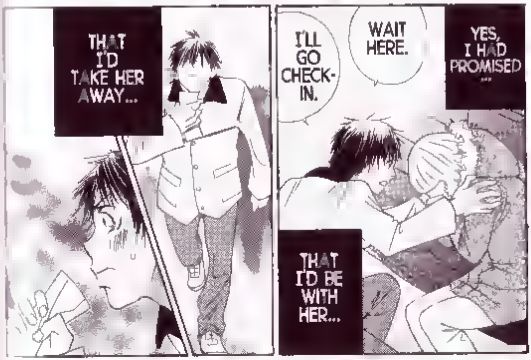
AKI...
NO..
I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK THERE.

AKI...
LET'S GO BACK.


DRIP
DRIP

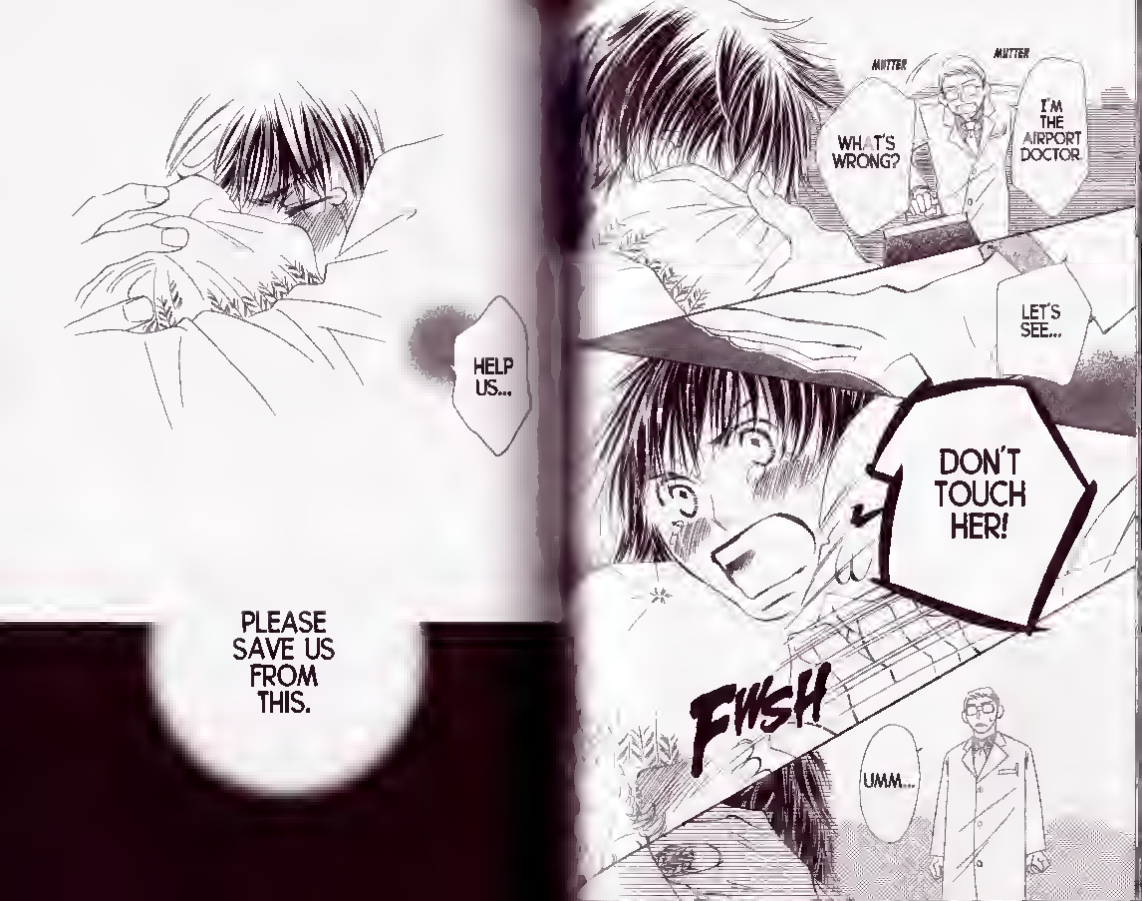

EVEN IF THAT PLACE...
SOME-WHERE THAT'S NOT HERE...
WAS IN THE DARKNESS.
MURMUR

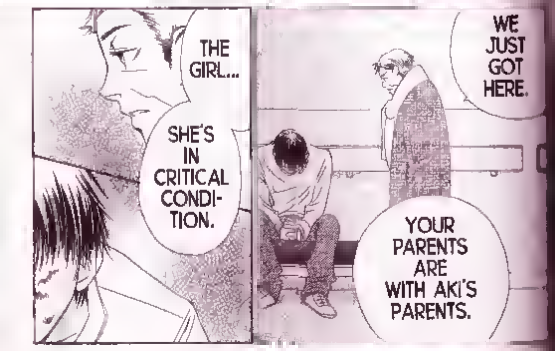

IF I'M SEPARATED FROM YOU NOW, I WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND YOU AGAIN, SAKU-CHAN.

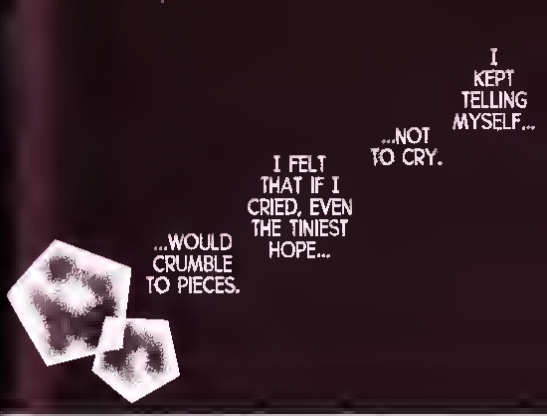

THAT I'D TAKE HER AWAY...
I'LL GO CHECK-IN.
WAIT HERE.
YES, I HAD PROMISED ...
THAT I'D BE WITH HER...

AKI!
AKI!!
WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE AKI?
WHY?
WHY US?

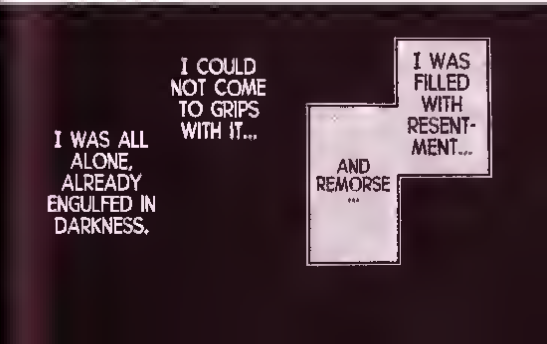
AKI...

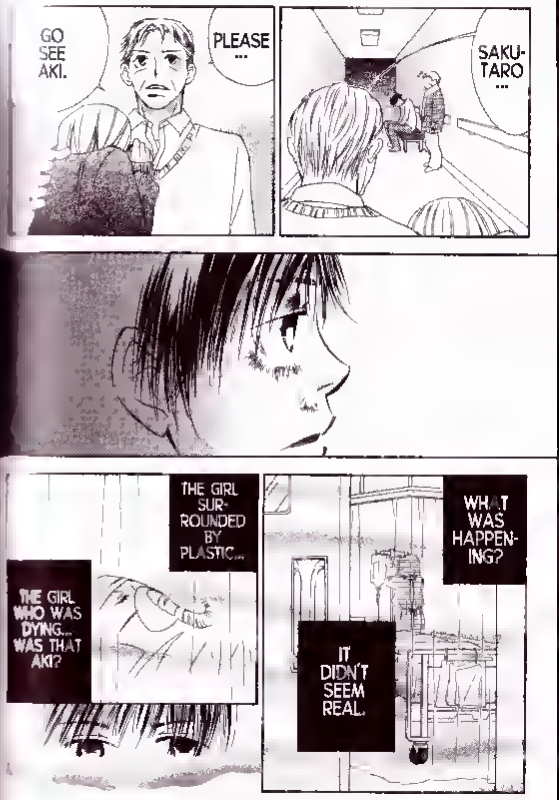

HELP US...
PLEASE SAVE US FROM THIS.
MUTTER
MUTTER
WHAT'S WRONG?
I'M THE AIRPORT DOCTOR
LET'S SEE...
DON'T TOUCH HER!
FWSH
UMM...

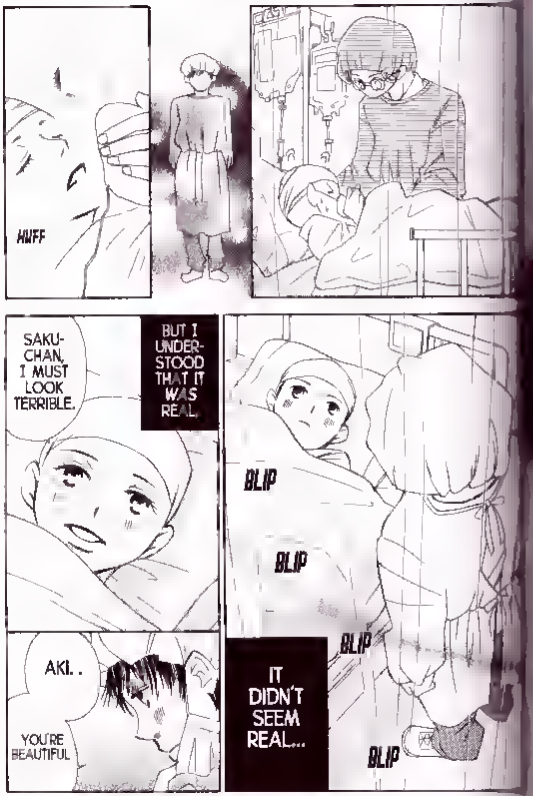




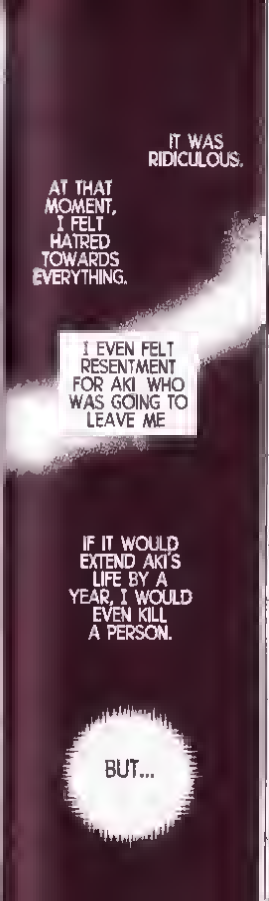
AND EVEN THOUGH I KNEW FROM THE BEGINNING THAT THERE WAS NO HOPE...



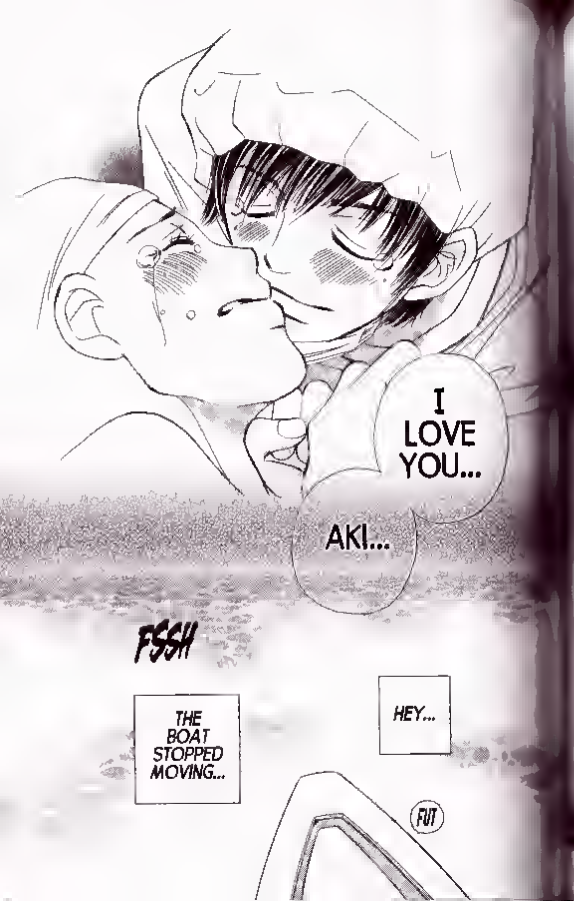

GO SEE AKI.
PLEASE...
SAKU-TARO...
THE GIRL SUR-ROUNDED BY PLASTIC...
THE GIRL WHO WAS DYING... WAS THAT AKI?
WHAT WAS HAPPEN-ING?
IT DIDN'T SEEM REAL.

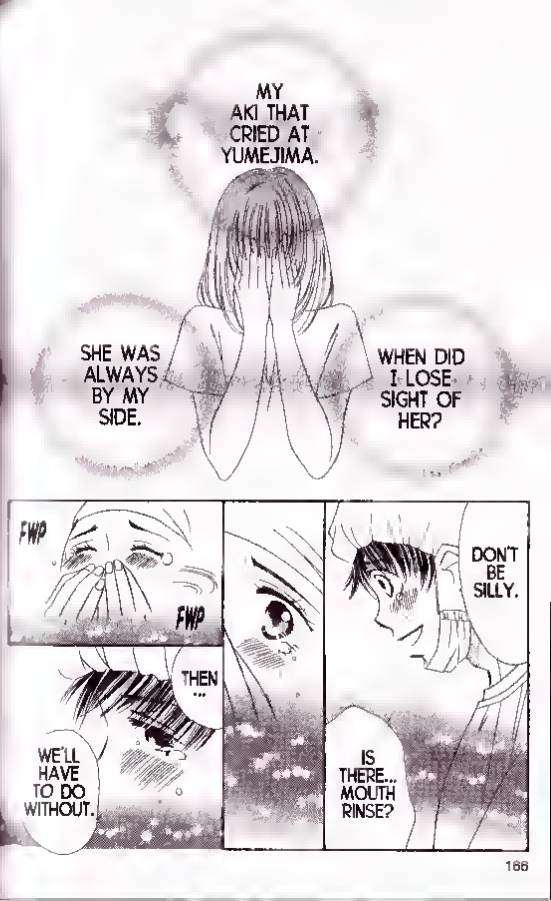

HUFF
SAKU-CHAN, I MUST LOOK TERRIBLE.
BUT I UNDER-STOOD THAT IT WAS REAL.
AKI..
YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL
BLIP
BLIP
BLIP
BLIP
IT DIDN'T SEEM REAL...

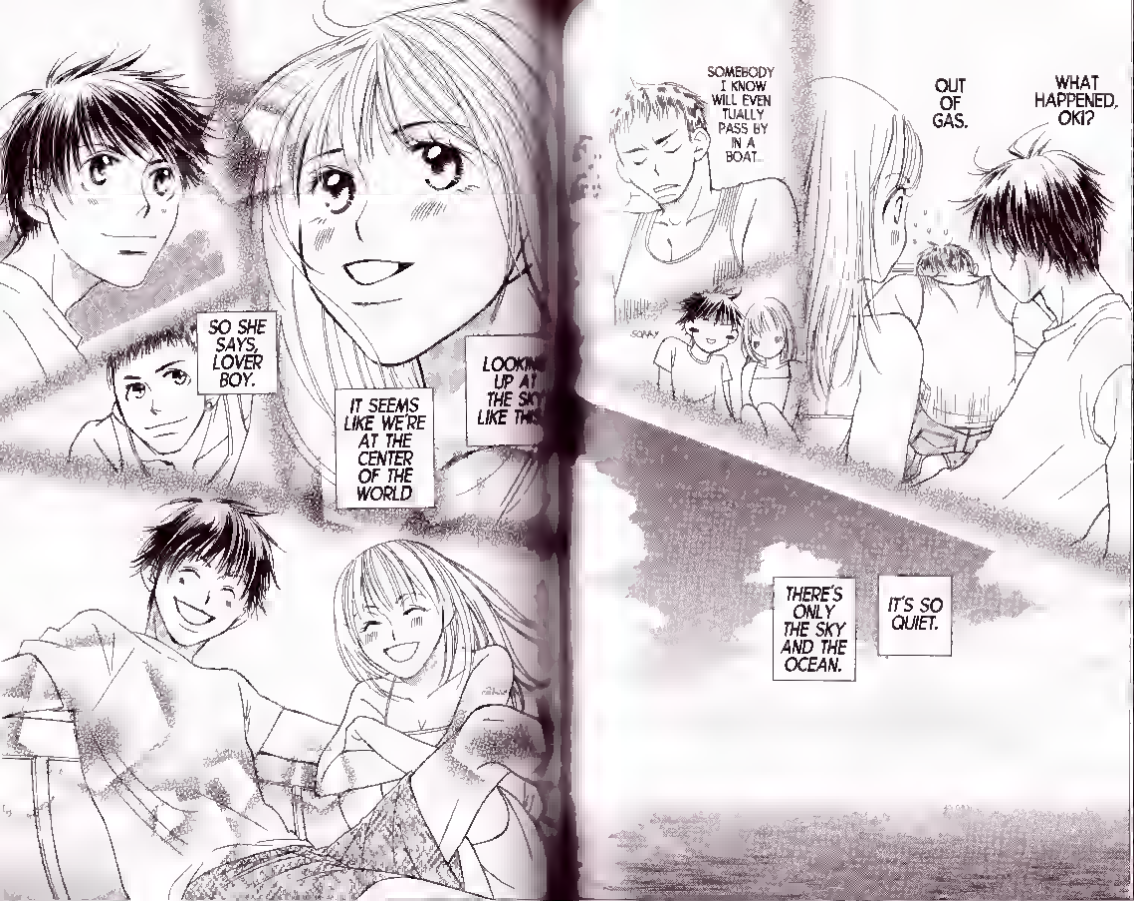
SAKU-CHAN..
SO THAT AKI COULD GO PEACEFULLY.
I DESPERATELY SEARCHED FOR THE RIGHT WORDS...
PLEASE.
PLEASE DON'T HATE ME.
SAKU-CHAN..
THIS WAS MY AKI.
I'M SORRY THAT YOU HAD TO SEE ME LIKE THAT.
DIDN'T ALL THAT BLOOD SHOCK YOU?

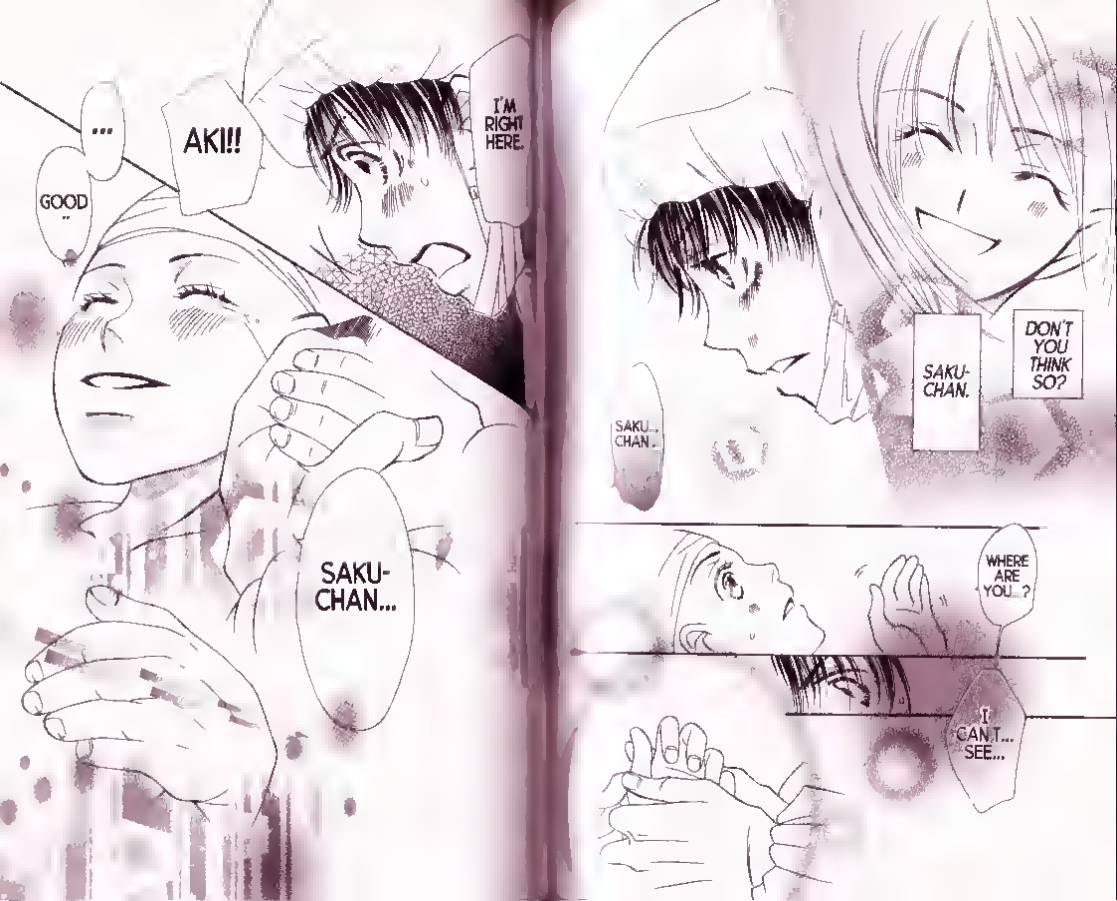

IT WAS RIDICULOUS.
AT THAT MOMENT, I FELT HATRED TOWARDS EVERYTHING.
I EVEN FELT RESENTMENT FOR AKI WHO WAS GOING TO LEAVE ME
IF IT WOULD EXTEND AKI'S LIFE BY A YEAR, I WOULD EVEN KILL A PERSON.
BUT...

I'M OKAY.
DON'T FORCE YOURSELF TO SPEAK
LET'S TRY AGAIN TO GO TO AUSTRALIA FOR CHRISTMAS.
I'M SURE THERE'LL BE KANGAROOS TIED IN PEOPLE'S YARDS.

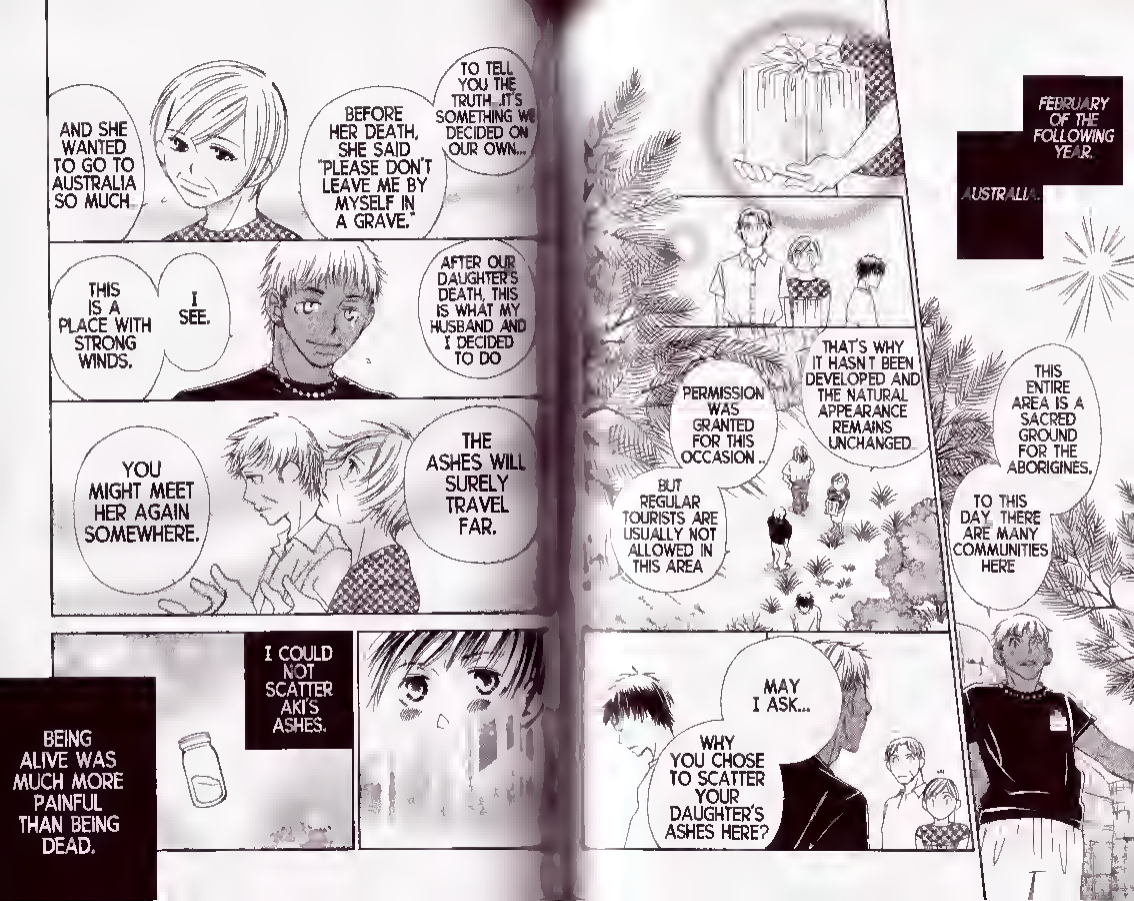

I LOVE YOU...
AKI...
FSSH
THE BOAT STOPPED MOVING...
HEY...
FUT


MY AKI THAT CRIED AT YUMEJIMA.
SHE WAS ALWAYS BY MY SIDE.
WHEN DID I LOSE SIGHT OF HER?
FWP
FWP
THEN...
WE'LL HAVE TO DO WITHOUT.
DON'T BE SILLY.
IS THERE... MOUTH RINSE?


SOMEBODY I KNOW WILL EVEN TUALLY PASS BY IN A BOAT...
SQUAT
OUT OF GAS.
WHAT HAPPENED, OKI?
THERE'S ONLY THE SKY AND THE OCEAN.
IT'S SO QUIET.
SO SHE SAYS, LOVER BOY.
IT SEEMS LIKE WE'RE AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD
LOOKING UP AT THE SKY LIKE THIS

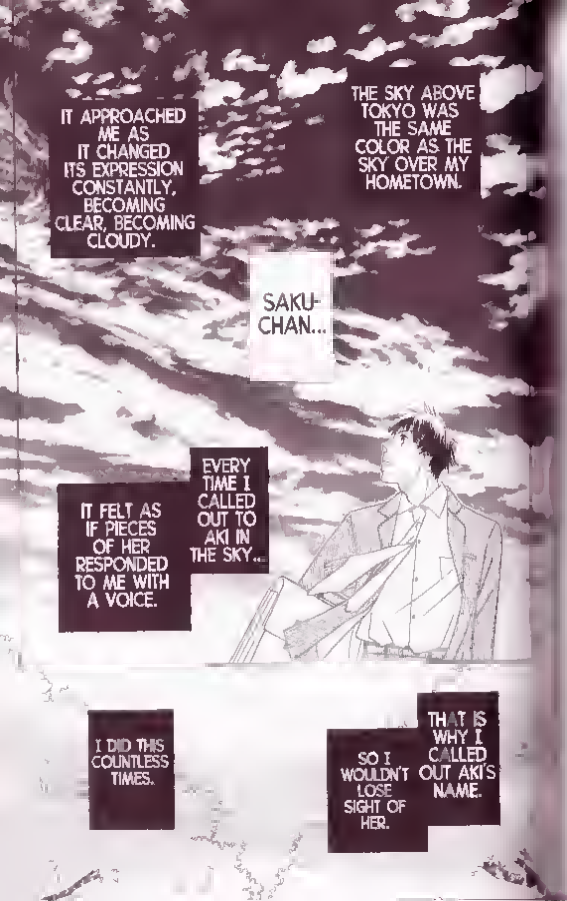

...
GOOD
AKI!!
I'M RIGHT HERE.
SAKU-CHAN...
SAKU... CHAN...
SAKU-CHAN.
DON'T YOU THINK SO?
WHERE ARE YOU...?
I CAN'T... SEE...

I SHOULTED
AT THE TOP
OF MY LUNGS,
BUT COULD
NOT MAKE
A SOUND.

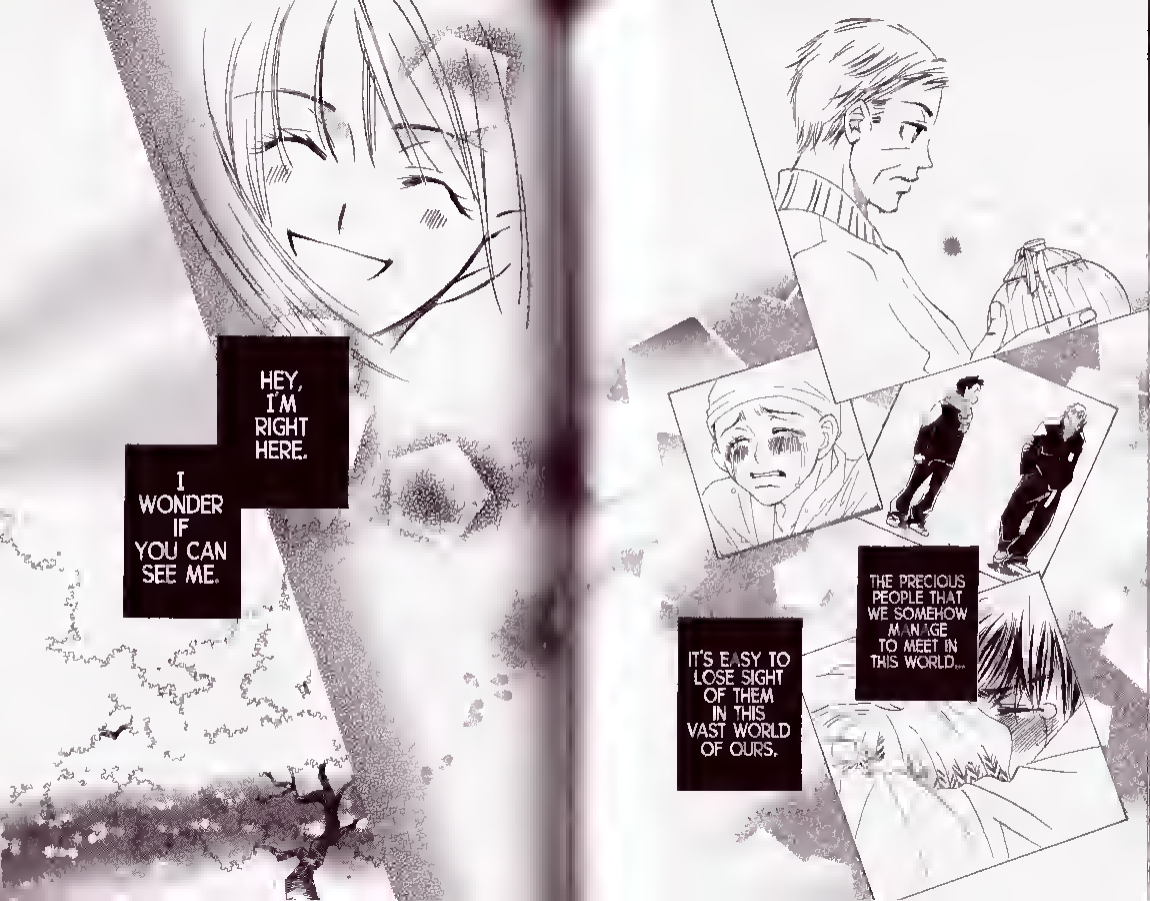

AND SHE WANTED TO GO TO AUSTRALIA SO MUCH.
BEFORE HER DEATH, SHE SAID "PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME BY MYSELF IN A GRAVE."
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH...IT'S SOMETHING WE DECIDED ON OUR OWN...
THIS IS A PLACE WITH STRONG WINDS.
I SEE.
AFTER OUR DAUGHTER'S DEATH, THIS IS WHAT MY HUSBAND AND I DECIDED TO DO
YOU MIGHT MEET HER AGAIN SOMEWHERE.
THE ASHES WILL SURELY TRAVEL FAR.
I COULD NOT SCATTER AKI'S ASHES.
BEING ALIVE WAS MUCH MORE PAINFUL THAN BEING DEAD.
FEBRUARY OF THE FOLLOWING YEAR.
AUSTRALIA.
PERMISSION WAS GRANTED FOR THIS OCCASION..
BUT REGULAR TOURISTS ARE USUALLY NOT ALLOWED IN THIS AREA
THAT'S WHY IT HASN'T BEEN DEVELOPED AND THE NATURAL APPEARANCE REMAINS UNCHANGED.
THIS ENTIRE AREA IS A SACRED GROUND FOR THE ABORIGINES.
TO THIS DAY THERE ARE MANY COMMUNITIES HERE
MAY I ASK...
WHY YOU CHOSE TO SCATTER YOUR DAUGHTER'S ASHES HERE?

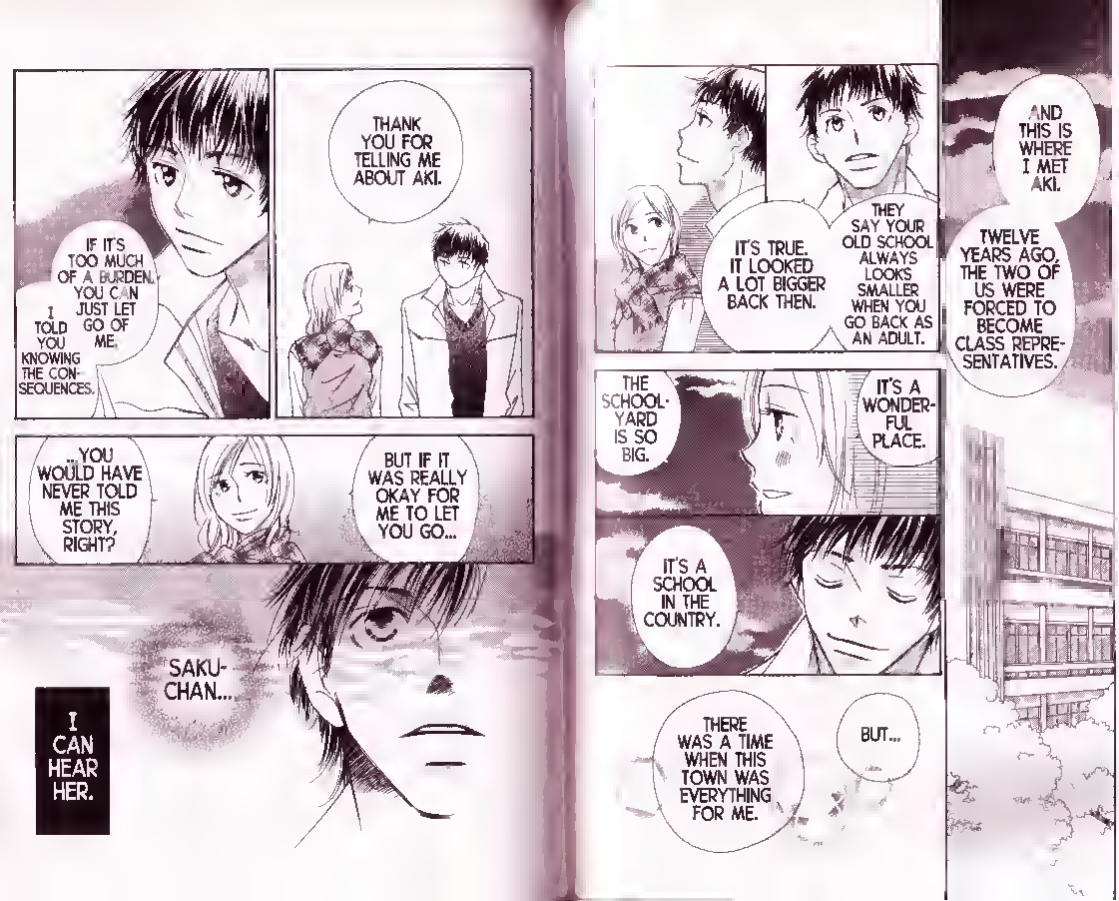
WHOOSH
THE WIND IS STRONG...
SAKU-CHAN..
YOU MIGHT MEET HER AGAIN SOME-WHERE.
THE ASHES WILL TRAVEL FAR.
THE SKY...
ITS COLOR WAS COMING BACK.
SAKU-CHAN...

I WAS TRULY ALONE.
IN A WORLD WITHOUT AKI...
I REALIZED SOME-THING.
I HAD NEVER LIVED IN A WORLD WITHOUT HER.
I WAS BORN ONE WEEK AFTER AKI.
THWAK
YOU OKAY?
OUCH
AFTER ALL...


IT APPROACHED ME AS IT CHANGED ITS EXPRESSION CONSTANTLY, BECOMING CLEAR, BECOMING CLOUDY.
THE SKY ABOVE TOKYO WAS THE SAME COLOR AS THE SKY OVER MY HOMETOWN.
SAKU-CHAN...
EVERY TIME I CALLED OUT TO AKI IN THE SKY...
IT FELT AS IF PIECES OF HER RESPONDED TO ME WITH A VOICE.
I DID THIS COUNTLESS TIMES.
SO I WOULDN'T LOSE SIGHT OF HER.
THAT IS WHY I CALLED OUT AKI'S NAME.

ONE OF THOSE TIMES WAS MY GRANDFATHER'S FUNERAL, AND JUST AS I PROMISED HIM I SCATTERED THOSE ASHES AT YUMEJIMA.
I DECIDED TO ATTEND A UNIVERSITY IN TOKYO. SINCE THEN, I RETURNED HOME INFREQUENTLY.
BEING IN MY HOMETOWN FILLED WITH MEMORIES OF AKI WAS DIFFICULT FOR ME.
I ASKED OKI FOR A BOAT AND DISCOVERED THAT HE WAS A MARRIED FATHER OF TWO CHILDREN.
OKI LAUGHED AS HE TOLD ME ABOUT HIS LIFE AND MADE ME HAPPY.
HE MUST BE ANOTHER ONE OF THE "PRECIOUS PEOPLE" MY GRANDFATHER WAS REFERRING TO.
SAKU, YOU'LL ALSO EVENTUALLY MEET A PRECIOUS PERSON.
MANY OF THEM.


HEY, I'M RIGHT HERE.
I WONDER IF YOU CAN SEE ME.
IT'S EASY TO LOSE SIGHT OF THEM IN THIS VAST WORLD OF OURS.
THE PRECIOUS PEOPLE THAT WE SOMEHOW MANAGE TO MEET IN THIS WORLD...


I TOLD YOU KNOWING THE CONSEQUENCES.
IF IT'S TOO MUCH OF A BURDEN, YOU CAN JUST LET GO OF ME.
THANK YOU FOR TELLING ME ABOUT AKI.
...YOU WOULD HAVE NEVER TOLD ME THIS STORY, RIGHT?
BUT IF IT WAS REALLY OKAY FOR ME TO LET YOU GO...
SAKU-CHAN...
I CAN HEAR HER.
IT'S TRUE. IT LOOKED A LOT BIGGER BACK THEN.
THEY SAY YOUR OLD SCHOOL ALWAYS LOOKS SMALLER WHEN YOU GO BACK AS AN ADULT.
AND THIS IS WHERE I MET AKI.
TWELVE YEARS AGO, THE TWO OF US WERE FORCED TO BECOME CLASS REPRESENTATIVES.
THE SCHOOLYARD IS SO BIG.
IT'S A WONDERFUL PLACE.
IT'S A SCHOOL IN THE COUNTRY.
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THIS TOWN WAS EVERYTHING FOR ME.
BUT...

THESE ARE HER ASHES.
I'M THINKING OF RETURNING THEM TO THE SKY.
IF I EVER HEAR HER VOICE..
I'D HAVE TO THANK HER.
BUT YOU WILL BE BY MY SIDE.
ONCE YOU SCATTER THEM YOU CAN'T GET THEM BACK
I DON'T MIND YOU KEEPING IT.
AND ALSO...
AKI WILL BE WAITING AT THE END OF MY LIFE.
RIGHT?
I WON'T LOSE SIGHT OF HER ANY-MORE
AKI IS ALREADY IN THE SKY.

I WONDER...
WOULD YOU BE ANGRY OR JUST LAUGH?
IF WE GOT INTO A FIGHT AND THEN DIDN'T CONTACT EACH OTHER FOR DAYS...
THEN PIECES OF AKI WOULD ANSWER BACK.
I MIGHT GET FRUSTRATED AND CALL OUT TO AKI IN THE SKY.
BUT THEN..
SAKU-CHAN..
AND THEN I WOULD FINALLY CALL YOU ON THE PHONE.
"THIS IS NO TIME TO BE CALLING OUT TO ME, YOU SHOULD BE CALLING HER."
AKI WOULD PROBABLY BE ANGRY AT ME. SHE'D SAY...

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME...

...I'VE SEEN SUCH A BEAUTIFUL SUNSET.

SAKU-CHAN...

The End

Shojo Beat Manga

Socrates in Love™

Based on the novel by

Kyoichi Katayama

Art by

Kazumi Kazui